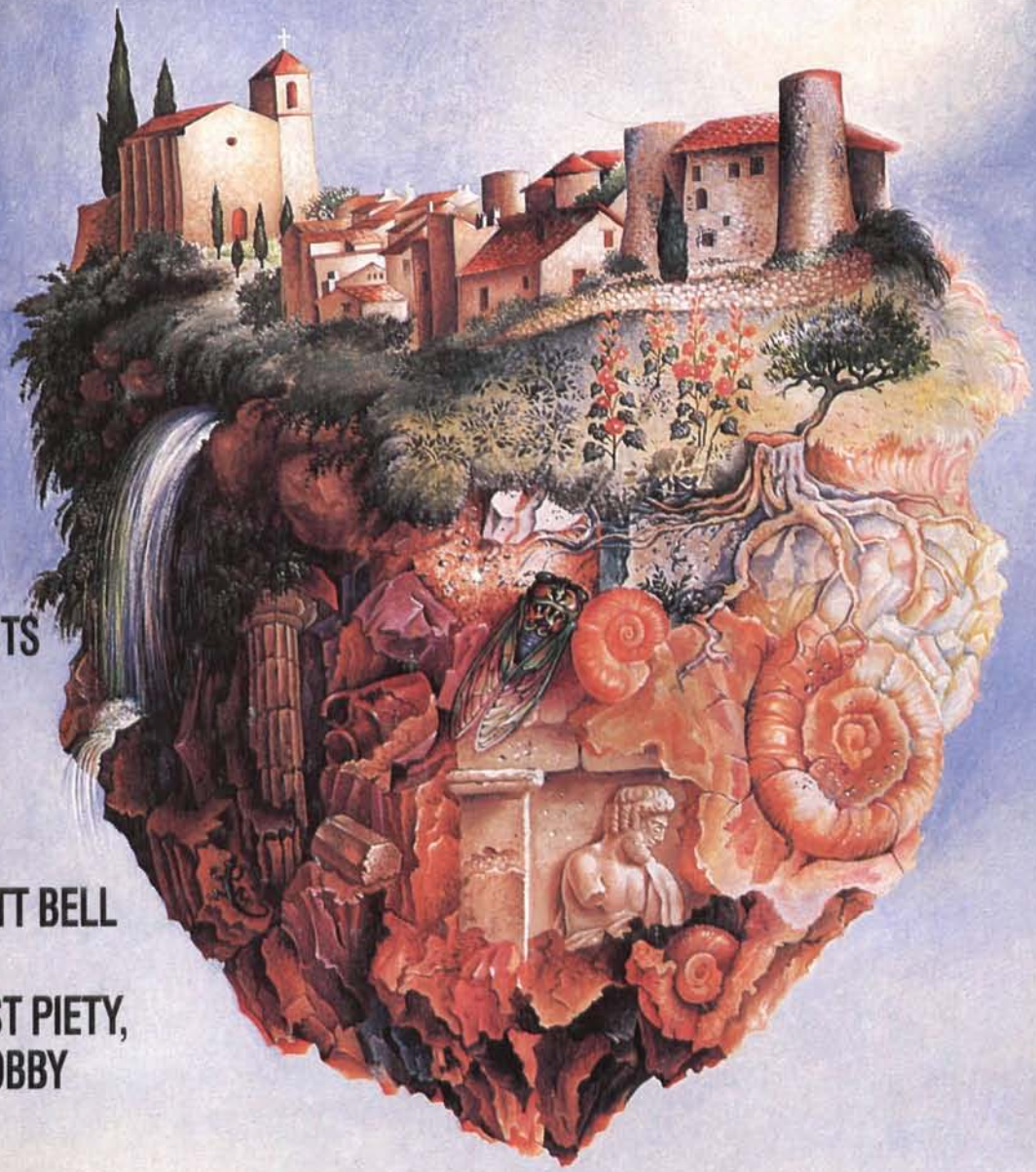
ptember 1988

$2.00

Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



RAFT AND TAX
OLITICAL PRIESTS
WHY NOT?

NDREW LYTLE
ALKS TO
IADISON SMARTT BELL
LSO:
UNDAMENTALIST PIETY,
HE RELIGION LOBBY

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 12, No. 9 September 1988

Editor
Thomas Fleming
Managing Editor
Momcilo Selic
Assistant Editor
Katherine Dalton
Poetry Editor
Andrei Navrozov
Contributing Editors
John W. Aldridge, Ronald Berman, Harold O.J. Brown, Bryce Christensen, Odie Faulk, Samuel Francis, Jane Greer, David Kaufman, E. Christian Kopff, John Shelton Reed, Joseph Schwartz, Gary Vasilash, Clyde Wilson
Editorial Secretary
Leann Dobbs
Editorial Assistant
Matthew Kaufman
Publisher
Richard A. Vaughan
Art Director
Anna Mycek-Wodecki
Production Manager
Patrick Doiel
Advertising Representative
Georgia L. Wolf
Composition Manager
Anita Fedora
Circulation Director
Carol Bennett
A Publication of
The Rockford Institute:
Allan C. Carlson, President

Editorial and Advertising Offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5811.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.
U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.
Copyright © 1988 by The Rockford Institute. All rights reserved.

CHRONICLES (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $21 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *CHRONICLES*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors.

CONTENTS

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

Espionage at the library. 4

PERSPECTIVE

Rights of Clergy 6
Politicized priests: draft 'em and tax' em?
by Thomas Fleming

VIEWS

Andrew Lytle Talks to Madison Smartt Bell 9
A conversation about lost worlds.

Speaking True 13
Driven from the sanctuaries, the faith takes refuge in poetry.
by Paul Ramsey

Mr. Eliot's Dreams 15
The Buddhist inspirations of a Christian poet.
by Peter Laurie

Time 18
"Time will say nothing but I told you so."
by Jocelyn Tomkin

OPINIONS

A Portrait of the Artisan as a Young Man 23
—*Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939* by Martin Stannard
by Gregory J. Sullivan

Speaking for God or Men? 25
—*Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* by Allen D. Hertzke
by E. Calvin Beisner

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Piety, Then and Now 27

—*Voices From the Heart: Four Centuries of American Piety* by Roger Lundin and Mark A. Noll
—*Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* by George Marsden

by K.L. Billingsley

Reading Swift Straight 31

—*The Alluring Problem: An Essay in Irony* by D.J. Enright

by F.W. Brownlow

Against a Clockwork God 32

—*The Pagan Temptation* by Thomas Molnar

by Douglas Groothuis

Galileo Brought to Book, Again 34

—*Galileo: Heretic* by Pietro Redondi

by Bryce J. Christensen

Pilgrim's Progress 35

—*Lovesong: Becoming a Jew* by Julius Lester

by Don Feder

Aristotle Shrugged 36

—*Educating for Virtue*, edited by Joseph Baldacchino

by Charles R. La Dow

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Albion by Andrei Navrozov 38

Letter From the Boardroom by Thomas L. Mammoser 39

Letter From Prague by Thomas Molnar 39

Letter From the Heartland by Jane Greer 40

Letter From B.U. by S. Steven Powell 42

VITAL SIGNS

THE ACADEMY

The New Obscurantism by Nicholas Davidson 45

DISEASE

AIDing Society by Wayne Lutton 46

DEPARTMENTS

POETRY

Siren by Frances Oliver 21

REVISIONS

Churchbusters: *The Bear's Hug: Christian Belief and the Soviet State, 1917-1986* 28

Religious Poetry: *Contemporary Religious Poetry* 41

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On 'Prankster From Tripoli' 50

Antony Sullivan Replies 50

On 'The Genderless Society' 51

On a 'Letter From a State of Mind' 51

Chronicles

SUBSCRIBER SERVICE

Missing Issues If your issue fails to arrive or is badly damaged in transit, send us the date of the issue and we will rush you a substitute.

Moving to a New Address Let us know your new address as early as possible and we will update your subscription file accordingly. Please allow 4 weeks for the address change.

Back Issue Requests Back issues can be ordered for $2.50 (including postage) while our inventory lasts. Please send check with order.

Gift Subscriptions Give Chronicles gift subscriptions to family and friends. We will be happy to bill you.

Subscriber Service Address

Please mail all correspondence about your subscription to:

Chronicles
P.O. Box 800
Mt. Morris, IL 61054

For Immediate Service call toll-free:
1-800-435-0715
Illinois Residents: 1-800-892-0753

On the Cover

Oil painting on the cover by Emilia Fitz. Inside illustrations by Zbigniew and Emilia Fitz. Illustration on page 6 by Anna Mycek-Wodecki.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hangouts for the KGB are what libraries have become, according to the FBI. In a new report to the Senate, the Bureau says that libraries have been targets of espionage efforts since at least 1962. The Soviets have found that laying hands on secret documents is frequently unnecessary; they can simply collect what they need in public research libraries, identifying "the nation's emerging technology before its components can become classified or restricted." Among other activities, KGB agents engage in "large-scale theft of microfiche records" and make special attempts to recruit librarians, whose familiarity with research techniques makes it possible to pursue "thousands of topics and areas of interest." Faced with this problem, the FBI has recently sought the help of librarians. The librarians, ever alert for the real enemy, have issued a call to arms against the FBI.

The Bureau's request, directed mainly at 21 scientific and technical libraries in the New York City area (home of the United Nations and several hundred Soviet-bloc "diplomats"), has been for notification of suspicious behavior by persons from hostile countries. Librarians' unions treat this as tantamount to establishing a police state. Margaret Chisholm, president of the American Library Association, imagines "the specter of . . . the FBI, or its surrogates, gazing over one's shoulder, following one through the stacks and to the photocopying machine, and making reports on database searches or items requested through interlibrary loan." Various ALA officials warn of "the gaze of Big Brother" and "a chilling impact on the First Amendment rights of each and every one of us." People for the American Way, predictably suing the FBI over the program, warns that "ordinary citizens engaged in harmless research could easily become enmeshed in a web of suspicion."

But FBI officials have proposed a limited program, involving not politically "dangerous ideas" but sensitive technical information which may determine the life and death of American soldiers and civilians. And, notwithstanding the talk of "webs of suspicion," there are far too few FBI agents to deal with existing foreign agents; they have little time to make life miserable for "ordinary citizens." (Other government agencies do that job.) In this program, they are doing the least they can do without forfeiting their duty of defending the United States.

If librarians are concerned about a police state on the horizon, they might reserve some alarm for the big one to the East. But on that issue they are the soul of equanimity. Moscow may be learning how to build a better bomber or a more powerful laser from our libraries, but ALA high-mindedly proclaims "our role to make available and provide access to a diversity of information." Chisholm declares that "foreign nationals in this country are entitled to the same First Amendment protections of speech as are citizens."

As this episode reminds, the public image of librarians is out of date. The prim-and-proper ladies who saw themselves as guardians of our civilization have retired. Their replacements, many of them children of the 1960's, may not be able to discern the totalitarian threat in the Soviet Union, but they spot it all over America—in the FBI, the Moral Majority, parents who don't want their children raised on Judy Blume. The most generous explanation for this world view is that today's librarians aren't too well-read. Some of them might benefit from checking out *The Gulag Archipelago*. (MK)

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles:*

Back in the U.S.S.R.

"From Lenin's and Pol Pot's experience we know that the more ideologues hurry, the more they kill. The era of detente, when the U.S.S.R., Romania, Poland, and East Germany began to exchange their undesirable subjects for Western subsidies (instead of murdering them) resulted in an implicit consensus that the slave-trade is a progressive improvement upon uncorrupted, idealistic communism."

—from "Solzhenitsyn: The Russian Liberal" by Mikhail S. Bernstam

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From the big bang to the future of the Universe and anything interesting in between... that's SMITHSONIAN magazine.

You're invited to join in Smithsonian's exploration of the human adventure.

When you open the covers of SMITHSONIAN magazine be prepared to be entertained. And be ready to have your life enriched. Because no other magazine offers SMITHSONIAN's delightful variety and wealth of ideas.

SMITHSONIAN looks into fascinating, little-known corners of history. It illuminates the arts. It stimulates and intrigues with stories covering nature, science, invention, people, other civilizations and cultures. Here's just a sampling from recent issues of SMITHSONIAN:

Did you know about the bizarre, brutal riot that was sparked by the rivalry of two actors?

Did Rodin purloin the ideas of his pupil, the beautiful Camille Claudel?

Can animals actually think—what do the scientists say now?

Did the politicians even in ancient Rome bamboozle the voters?

Is it too rash to say we're close to a cure for poison-ivy reactions?

Has the mystery of the Arctic's most tragic expedition finally been solved?

Shakespeare portrayed Richard III as one of history's vilest villains—was the Bard wrong?

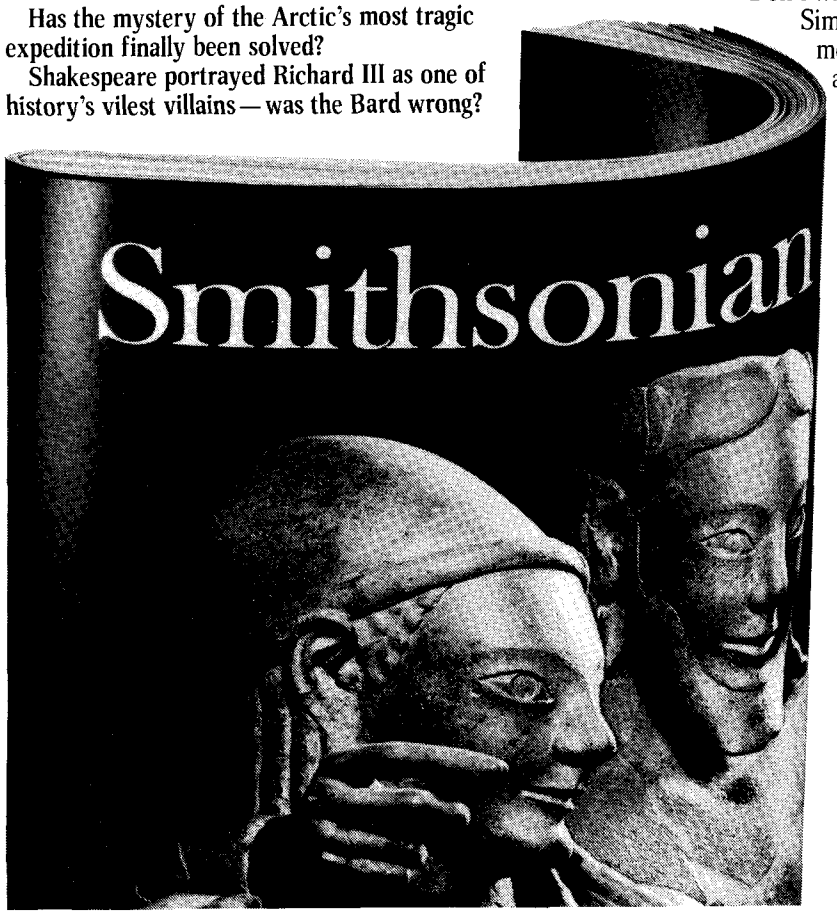
High fashion, hard work, wheeling and dealing—just what goes on in New York's Garment District?

You and your whole family will enjoy SMITHSONIAN magazine with its exciting, vividly written articles and beautiful illustrations. And what a superb gift idea it makes; perfect for any occasion, appreciated every month of the year.

Subscribe to SMITHSONIAN and you'll receive more than a great magazine. You automatically become a National Associate Member. As a member, you're eligible for discounts on so many beautiful and interesting products that are the outgrowth of the Smithsonian Institution's work in the arts, history, science and nature—art reproductions, jewelry, crafts, books and records available at the Smithsonian Museum shops and through our mail catalogs. There are domestic and foreign travel benefits too, plus seminars you can attend, and a great deal more.

Join today—return the coupon below.

Don't wait. Share in the exciting Smithsonian experience. Simply fill in the coupon and mail it today for twelve months of beautiful SMITHSONIAN Magazine and all the benefits of associate membership.



83QG3

Smithsonian
228 East 45th Street
Suite 1515
New York, New York 10017

Please enroll me as a Member of the Smithsonian National Associates, and enter my subscription for the next year (12 issues) of SMITHSONIAN.
Bill me the annual dues of $20.

Name_____
(please print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Member Benefits
- SMITHSONIAN magazine—12 issues
- Travel Program—Domestic and Foreign
- Book and Gift Discounts
- Reception desk at Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC

Limited time offer — Foreign: add $10 for postage

Smithsonian.
Join in the human adventure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RIGHTS OF CLERGY *by Thomas Fleming*

I saw my old friend Browne recently. The subject eventually turned to the politics of religion and the religion of politics. I asked him what he thought about the current Anglican debate over homosexuality, and I wondered aloud if it had anything to do with the obvious unmanliness of the clergy—the final phase of what Ann Douglas called "feminization." Somewhat hesitantly he confessed that he hadn't been in an Episcopal church for a number of years. I assumed that he had gone back to his family's ancestral Methodism or Calvinism, but no. He simply didn't go to church. "I had my children christened and confirmed. I did my duty, and it's up to them now. The truth is," he declared, "I can no longer stand the effrontery of clergymen."

I made the best case for going to church I could think of at that late hour and quoted George Herbert at him:

> Judge not the preacher, for he is thy judge
> If thou mistake him, thou conceiv'st him not:
> God calleth preaching folly: do not grudge
> to pick out treasures from an earthen pot:
> the worst speak something good; if all want sense,
> God takes the text and preacheth patience.

But I could see that I was making little headway. I was reminded of a conversation I'd had a year or so ago with another former Anglican—a distinguished social philosopher who tried to explain to me how he had spent 10 years in an unsuccessful attempt to be a regular communicant. In the end, he gave it up. The clergy, he insisted, were insupportable: vain, pretentious, poorly educated, and politically incorrigible were the more polite charges. To this list, my friend Browne adds the worst: "Their sermons are boring. Sam Johnson went to plain prayer services—no sermons—to set a good example. He didn't want people to think he went to church only to be entertained by the sermon. Small chance of that, these days."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These are familiar tales of the Episcopal Church—PECUSA, as it is sometimes known to initiates. However, I might just as easily have chosen examples from Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, and Presbyterian friends. These days it is hard to find a thoughtful person who is really satisfied with his church, and the cause of the disgust is almost always the clergy.

"Some of the lower orders of clergy are occasionally not too bad," Browne concedes, "but the executives are the greatest offenders against public decency around: bloated Catholic bishops with hard eyes and fatuous voices, well-tailored Anglicans with fatuous manners and old money, Hollywood-coiffured evangelists who made their money with the old-fashioned techniques of a street Arab: begging and stealing."

I pointed out the obvious and honorable exceptions. There are Anglicans in the South—even bishops—who recall happier times for the Church. One of the youngest is an ecclesiastical historian of sound principle and upright character. You can still meet an occasional two-fisted Irishman or mule-headed German among the sniveling epicenes that are now manufactured by the nation's Catholic seminaries; and, to be fair, some of the best men we both had known included clergymen: Southern Baptists, Roman Catholics, and at least two Anglicans. One of them was a simple man who had worked on the railroad. Recovering from an accident, he decided to investigate the claims made by the various Christian sects. After a period of study and deliberation, he chose the Episcopal Church. It sounds bizarre, but he believed it and lived in that belief as a faithful priest who ministered to mission churches, working a second job to support his family. Even in the most politicized churches, e.g., the Methodists, there are hundreds of decent men who go quietly about their work of baptizing, serving communion, preaching the gospel, and counseling all those who are troubled in mind, body, or estate.

What a contrast with the Trollopean characters who sit in bishops' chairs today. The Anglican clergy no longer hunt foxes, but they are quick to adopt all the other enthusiasms of the American upper class. They issue forth from their exclusive neighborhoods to lead demonstrations against apartheid; freed forever from the obligation to defend their country, they huff and puff over world peace and nuclear disarmament—while at the same time calling for jihads against Chile and South Africa; living comfortably on tax-sheltered incomes, they summon the rest of us to a life of fasting and humility—for what? Service to the Lord? No, service to humanity, to social and economic justice, and to all the other code words for the principalities and powers that rule this world.

Most Americans, especially the beneficiaries, take these privileges of clergy for granted. We leap easily from the later Middle Ages, when an almost universal church rivaled the power and authority of emperors and kings, to the present secular age as if there had been no Reformation, no American Revolution, no Constitution. Conservatives frequently sneer at Jefferson and Madison for their anxieties about established churches, but it is from the comfortable distance of 200 years of disestablishment. Perhaps we worry, those of us who are believers, too much about the encroachments of the state upon the freedom of religion and too little about the churches' intrusion into politics. A few years ago the liberals were fond of asking if we wanted Jerry Falwell in our bedroom. For most Americans the answer was no, but there is another, more pressing question: do we want the Catholic bishops—bulging with tax-exempt and tax-sheltered wealth—interfering in affairs of state and national defense? It is not just conservative Catholics who see the bishops as a lobbying force against the national interest. Many Protestants and secularist liberals are fed up with the political pretentions of these armchair politicians, and the church is now facing legal actions that would drastically alter its tax status.

In fairness to Mr. Falwell, I should point out that as head of the Moral Majority he was only claiming the rights of a private citizenry in a democracy. But the Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican bishops—acting with all the courtesy and restraint of Iranian Mullahs at a NOW convention—do not trouble themselves about the rights and duties of citizenship. Because they have mumbled certain formulae (whether they believe them or not) and chosen to wear exotic costumes, the higher clergy lay claim to a wide variety of political rights that transcend both law and public interest.

I sometimes wonder what things would be like if Mr. Jefferson's proposed "wall of separation" had been built and buttressed by federal statutes and local tax codes. Before the days of income taxes the issue hardly came up, but it is time for a second look. Why are donations to churches automatically tax-exempt, and why are most of their earnings sheltered? It is true that similar exemptions are given to groups whose stated purpose—charity, education, the arts—correspond to some public commitment. In this light, religion, even viewed as a merely social phenomenon, is of such manifest public utility that it can safely be included with public sculpture and government schools.

Still, atheists and secularists do have a point when they argue that religion is, in the modern world, more controversial than education. They wonder why nonbelievers should pay higher taxes to make up for what is lost through religious exemptions. Carried to an extreme, this line of reasoning would set up a cafeteria tax structure in which citizens paid only for government activities of which they approved. Even the libertarians' minimal state could be regarded as coercive because it would compel us to support the warmongering activities of the State Department. If religion goes, the surgeon general and his sex pamphlets might be next.

Religion has always played a particularly significant role in American life, ever since the Jamestown settlers conducted the first Thanksgiving. Churches perform valuable charitable services, and if we are worried about tax subsidies for religion, we might also consider the amount of money we would otherwise spend on educating the children who attend religious schools. These are good, practical reasons that must be taken into consideration, but religious leaders typically go much further and claim their privileges as a right. In recent zoning disputes, some churches have declared themselves exempt from any local restrictions that might hinder the free exercise of religion. Today it is zoning; tomorrow it will be health codes; next week it could be polygamy. Some churches are already notorious for violating antigambling ordinances. (In the Beatles' first movie, Paul's Irish grandfather goes to a casino and insists on saying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"bingo" instead of "banco." It's a natural mistake.)

Freedom of religion is a vast umbrella that may be used to shelter Islam and Buddhism, Voodoo and Santeria, Christian Science and the Unification Church, along with the branches of Christianity and Judaism with which the framers of the Constitution were familiar. One man's humbug is another man's revelation, and in contemporary America it is getting harder and harder to distinguish between a Methodist prayer meeting and a Black mass, between Kosher butchers and the ritual sacrifice of goats and chickens in a Chicago housing project. In a country where Satanists go on talk shows to defend their point of view, can we really exclude Oriental cult leaders from the rights and privileges enjoyed by Jesuits? If the draft were reinstituted, it would be impossible to decide on the *bona fides* of every shirker who nominated himself High Priest of the ancient rites of Baal.

Perhaps we ought not to try. After all, the Constitution does not automatically exempt priests or other "conscientious" persons from military service. In the nation's first 100 years, various religious groups, like the Quakers, won certain privileges from state legislatures, but even in the Civil War the Episcopal Church failed to secure draft exemption for its ministers. It has only been in the 20th century that such exemptions have been routinely granted, but the federal courts have consistently maintained that it is a privilege rather than a right. Right or privilege, it was exercised with an unwholesome frequency in the last years of conscription. In many denominations it is a standing joke to suspect the vocation of any clergyman who attended divinity school during the Vietnam War.

What earthly or heavenly good it does to exempt Unitarians and free-thinking Methodists from the draft is anybody's guess. I can't even imagine the rationale that would justify special treatment for liberal seminarians who profess, more or less, nothing. Even for serious Protestants, there is no obvious reason why ministers should be accorded special treatment. At the heart of the Reformation is an attack upon the metaphysical status of the clergy. While the Protestant minister must be a man of virtuous conduct and correct principle to carry out his duties, the priest—Catholic, Orthodox, or even Anglican—is what he is in spite of his character. He can bind and loose souls, exorcise demons, and act *in persona Christi* in the mass. As a holy man, his purity is of as much (perhaps more) concern as his morals, and he must be kept free from the taint of blood. Such a person should not be in a position to make war or even to sit on a jury in a capital case.

That, at least, was the ideal. History records more than a few examples of Catholic bishops—even a Pope—leading armies into battle, and in the last century some Orthodox priests in the Balkans were as much partisan commanders as priests. While I would not necessarily recommend drafting the clergy, it is a pleasant speculation. What would it be like if we reinstituted national military training for all able men? I can see it now. Marine Boot Camp at Parris Island, SC, in August. As the DI gets to the end of roll call, he bellows: Arbuckle, Fatty, Most Reverend; Greenstreet, Sidney, Most Reverend. Between them this pair of typical bishops weigh in at half a ton, and one would pay a good deal to see them wallowing through an obstacle course in the summer heat. "Come on, your excellencies, get the lead out. MOVE."

Back in the barracks the bishops could explain their views on social justice and world peace to recruits from Arkansas and Alabama. "Tell that to the Marines" is an old Army response to any ridiculous story, but even the sensitive Marines who complained about Clint Eastwood's *Heartbreak Ridge* would have trouble swallowing any of the Catholic bishops' declarations. It is precisely these political statements and activities that are undermining all our natural respect for the clergy.

The bishops and denominational leaders had better make up their minds on what their proper business is—politics or the faith. If it is politics, then they should register as lobbying agents or run for office. Frankly, it does not matter which side they are on. Defenses of free enterprise and democracy are as out of place in the pulpit as tirades against Reagan and nuclear weapons. If Christianity can be reduced to a capitalism or Communism, it is a very paltry sort of faith. The truth is, the Church has flourished under the Byzantine Empire, the French monarchy, and the predemocratic American republic, and today it is as strong in Communist Poland as it is in democratic America. In both cases, I suspect it is in spite of, not because of, politics.

There is something suspicious in the conduct of men who abandon the highest vocation and descend to the level of political shills. Like the Rev. Richard Price, they celebrate bloody revolutions and give speeches on equality. Burke's answer to Price's sermon on the French Revolution was his famous *Reflections*, in which he made an observation that is far more relevant today than it was in the 1790's:

> Politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement. No sound ought to be heard in church but the healing voice of Christian charity.

The alternative is some form of state religion. If we can judge from the examples of the Russians, the English, and the Swedes, state churches experience all the corrupting influences that usually accompany excessive wealth and power. A little suffering is good for the faith. Persecution forces us to choose between God and Mammon, but established churches are more tolerant: Why not God *and* Mammon? The result, in England, has been a series of revolutions against the establishment, represented by the figures of Wycliffe, Cranmer, Sir Thomas More, the Puritans, the Anglican bishops who resisted James II, the Wesleys, et al. The English Church has had more than its share of great men, but in most cases they have found themselves at odds with the political opportunists who served as bishops.

My friend Browne, by the way, is working on a play written in answer to Jean Anouilh's *Becket* and Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. In his *Henry II*, we will be treated to a politicized and faithless cleric who used his ecclesiastical office as a base for schemes and plots against one of the most effective rulers in the history of England. Reduced to despair over his friend's betrayal and his interference with every plan for reforming the government and strengthening the realm, King Henry II finally uttered the line that increasing numbers of Americans are already thinking in their hearts: "Will no one revenge me of the injuries I have sustained from one turbulent priest?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANDREW LYTLE TALKS
to Madison Smartt Bell

Andrew Lytle lives in a log house on the Assembly Grounds in Monteagle, Tennessee. It is a busy area in summer, but in the wintertime most of the other houses are closed, and he has few immediate neighbors. The house is built on a cross plan and has somewhat unusually high ceilings. Most often Mr. Lytle sees company in the bar of the cross onto which the front door opens, where chairs are ringed around a sofa, before a big stone fireplace. Left of the mantle is a small portrait of Nathan Bedford Forrest, whose biography was Lytle's first book. Further into the house are some family portraits, and within handy reach there is a sideboard with several silver cups bearing signs of use and a bottle or two of Weller's bourbon whiskey.

This interview took place in the form of a general conversation among a various group of people seated before the fire. The talk was by no means exclusively literary, but ranged over country matters and otherwise, from what might have gone on in the Garden of Eden to what was going on then in the garden out back.

Mr. Lytle held the center of the conversation, without particularly trying to. To a considerably greater degree than the rest of us, he displayed a facility for connecting ideas both to one another and to the practical affairs of life. He lives, it appears, in a whole *world, whose parts are all organically related and where every notion finds its natural place in an order of things. The listener senses that for him ideas are less abstract than concrete, meant not merely to be speculated upon, but lived. One suspects that he may be one of the last adepts of a developed art of being, which by now has been almost entirely lost.*

Bell: I wanted to ask you about a term you've used from time to time, in letters and in print: "the hovering bard." What is the hovering bard, exactly?

Lytle: An extension of Henry James's "central intelligence," that's what it is. It's somebody who sees everything from above and can bring it together. Just as you have in a real country community somebody who knows something about what happened. Every country society has one, who doesn't do anything, doesn't work, just listens to everything, tells tales, tells what everybody's doing, you know. A sort of disappointed or incompleted artist, who gathers it all together. And—he would hover over it all.

Bell: So it's a person inside the story that that voice comes from.

Lytle: Yes, he can be a character. Jack Cropleigh would be it in *The Velvet Horn*. Someone like Jack Cropleigh, who doesn't dominate every scene, but could have. Everything could have taken place in his mind, you have to assume that. So it's rather tricky, but it's not an omission, it allows the comment to come through this particular hovering bard to become a choral effect, along with the action.

Bell: Can the function of the bard move from person to person in a story?

Lytle: Yes, but you can't just move it briefly. You can't do it just for several paragraphs or a page or a short chapter. It has to be a whole section which comes to some kind of conclusion, but which is part of the general, ultimate conclusion. But it's never stated. As long as you say, "I remember," then it ceases to exist. Because nothing exists in the past. So what you have to do is make the past into a moving present tense, joined to this one. It took me months to work it out.

Bell: How long did you spend on *The Velvet Horn*, altogether?

Lytle: Seven or eight years. I had started a book that I thought was going to be about a society that is dead. And then I realized that nothing which is dead ever moves. So what you really write about is people and a given condition. I spent two years on that before I realized you never write

Madison Smartt Bell's most recent novel is The Year of Silence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about anything dead. And at that time I happened to be reading Jung and Newman and Zimmer and mythology, and that gave me my enveloping action.

Bell: Could you say what the enveloping action is?

Lytle: Enveloping action is the universal, the thing which is always true. The simplest example is the triumvirate: two people in love with one person. You can have a million circumstances there. So what you do is envelop the whole action, as a particular action representing that universal. So the present action will also represent the other.

Bell: Would you say what it was in *The Velvet Horn*?

Lytle: I don't know. Incest—spiritual and otherwise. I wouldn't say absolutely.

Bell: Well, I wanted to get you to talk about shifting point of view, which it seems that you don't much approve of. I am wondering when it can work and when it can't.

Lytle: Oh yes. It's a weakness for two reasons. On the reader's part, he gets identified with a person and a point of view—you do that, certainly, in James's central intelligence. Well, if you use that and then shift it to somebody else, then it puzzles the reader. He doesn't know what to believe, finally. That's the effect.

Bell: And a book can't get resolved if the point of view shifts?

Lytle: It cannot, there is just no way for it to.

Bell: What about the couple of Faulkner books that work that way, such as *As I Lay Dying*?

Lytle: Well, the dead woman holds it together in *As I Lay Dying*. She's there. Think about it. She's always present, as if she is not dead. That's how it's held together; the presence is there, and that's why the voices work.

Bell: But in *The Vanquished*, for instance, it's all told in the voice of the boy. So you don't have the problem of separating voices.

Lytle: Yes. It's in the first person; that's the most dangerous point of view of all. With first person, I say you've got the limitation of prejudice, and then you don't get the whole truth because the actor is involved, and then you've got omissions. But if you can have that attitude and still indirectly show the whole truth, then it works.

Bell: Then that would make the narrator the hovering bard?

Lytle: It would make him the bard, don't you see?

Bell: You've written that dialogue is not enough to make fiction, and that summary is important.

Lytle: Summary is fiction. Because the summary includes scenes and also the implications of scenes. You've got to have the scene, the scene is the center, it's drama. You have to have it because it's concrete. So you hear people speaking in terms of the action, but summary comes out of the enveloping action, I suppose. I think that fiction is a summary—summary of scenes leading up to the scene which you need.

Bell: Did your acting career contribute to that understanding? What did you do in the Yale Drama School?

Lytle: I went there to study action, scene, really, what it comes down to, and I learned that.

Bell: What sort of parts did you play?

Lytle: Different ones. I was not a matinee idol. I wrote a play that was put on, a one-act play. Made a big hit in Nashville. Called *The Lost Sheep*. It really went well, for three weeks.

I was in one play on Broadway, ran for four months. It was called *The Grey Fox*, about Machiavelli. Henry Hull played in it, Crystal Hull was the female lead. I was Machiavelli's clerk.

Bell: You were in damn good company.

Lytle: Oh yes, that was pretty good company. And I got a $50 bill and a $10 bill every Saturday night. You could live on it then.

Onstage, you see the actors physically moving, and they arrange their movements, acting together, and you get a sense that you never can in the written word. But you've got to try to get that sense. Your problem is how, by the use of the five senses, to make the reader see what he would see in the theater. That's how it seems to me.

Everybody uses the five senses who writes. But Flaubert is the man who almost made a law of it. He said the more you use the senses, the more sense of being, of the reality of living people, you get. You've got sight, the sovereign sense, and hearing is awfully close. The mortal senses, smell, taste, and particularly touch: you can't reach the world, you can't love, you can't do any of these things without touch. And the more of those you use, the more imitation of life you will get.

That's why you've got to have the scene, but you've got to have behind that all the enveloping action, all the summary leading up to it. And scene is very extravagant. Hemingway can make a scene, his is nearly all scene, some of it. His panoramic summaries are stage directions, certainly in "The Killers." But he can take dialogue and not only make the action advance, but the understanding of it. Well, you can go through the whole of "The Killers" and just see what the summary will do with the scenic directions.

Bell: Do you have any ideas about ways of living that would allow a person sufficient time to write?

Lytle: There's no one way. I think you've got to have a little luck, for one thing. You can teach in these places, they help. You might farm. I tried farming. Now if you own the farm, and have some cows, and want to go and milk, and do those things, then you might do it.

Bell: Except it ends up that takes most of your time, doesn't it?

Lytle: Well, don't try to do too much. You've got to have some help, you know.

Bell: I've heard you say it from time to time that you couldn't farm even with help and write at the same time.

Lytle: I mean, really farm. But you can do, say, one thing. Cows, you can have something to live on. You can make a garden, I do that here, you can do certain things. You cannot really farm and write.

I'll tell you what I did, I had a man do over an old log barn on one place, and I ought to have been out there watching. But I was trying to write, and I wrote four pages, I thought it was perfectly beautiful. When I looked at it, when I got through, I kept one sentence.

Bell: You were watching him out of the corner of your eye, then.

Lytle: But you've got to do something. And if you own the land . . . but if you've got to pay the mortgage, you've got to grow things you don't want to grow, like tobacco. That's 14 months a year, tobacco. And there it goes. Now I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think you can do it, but in comparison to teaching, you've got to teach too. Even writing: there's just no one solution.

Here's what I do, and this is the ground on which you begin: sit down at the same place every day at the same time, and put yourself away from yourself, and enter the imaginary world. And then do the day's stint. And if you've got the strength left, then you can do whatever else you have to do. The only trouble with that is, that always has its own measure and its own rules.

When I was working on *The Long Night*, there was a hill behind the house, you know, and I would go up and put a board across a stump or something and stay there all day. And when I came in my father asked me how the muse had treated me. "Well," I said, "I saw a snake chase a frog to a tree. And the frog got to the tree and the snake crawled slowly behind the brush and then he turned and looked at me."

Bell: That's in the book, isn't it?

Lytle: Yes. I was just another creature out there, and nothing could intervene.

Bell: Have you seen that book, *Nashville: The Occupied City*?

Lytle: I've got it here, but I haven't read it. I just don't like to read about the Civil War anymore. It's not always miswritten, but it is so sad. There was no reason really there, at the end . . . they were as exhausted as we were. And they'd got all the people they could out of Europe. And Grant had thrown away 10,000 men in one attack; the men put their addresses on their backs.

Bell: Cold Harbor?

Lytle: Yes, Cold Harbor. And Jefferson Davis wouldn't let Lee retreat to the mountain, and if he had, then Lincoln probably would not have been reelected, and McClellan would have been, and we could have brought the war to an end. That's a possibility, but it didn't happen, and so that's what we've got to live with.

Bell: Where would we be if that had come to pass?

Lytle: Well, I think the Industrial Revolution would have been slowed. But I don't know how far. They might have rejoined the old Union, I don't know what that would have been. Or you could have had the Confederacy by itself. Then they probably would have taken Mexico and Cuba. They had an army, and the Austrians were done for there. The Yankees wanted to do it, too, so you just can't tell. I think they would have moved in that direction.

Bell: What would life have been like?

Lytle: Country people would have made a living again, that's what they would have done.

Bell: You think there's a way we could have avoided having McDonalds and K-Marts all through here?

Lytle: I don't think that's the farming interest. [laughs] We've got as many stupid people here as they've got anywhere else, of course. It's true. But they weren't that stupid before the war, because everybody was well-informed on politics, they loved to hear people debate.

You know, I figured finally, after 60 years, that that was one reason why nobody paid any attention to the Agrarian position: nobody could think of his own society disappearing. They couldn't think of it.

Bell: It did, though.

Lytle: Right underneath them, yes. But you can see how that would be. Because this is the greatest revolution that's happened, certainly, in our time.

Bell: Well, it's the most destructive.

Lytle: Yes. Well, they put this car plant at Smyrna, they ruined that beautiful country over there, for 3,000 jobs, not two million. And you're not going to control them, and it's going to go bankrupt finally, because people don't have the money to buy that many cars.

You know, it doesn't take but one bad idea, that's all you've got to have, to destroy a man or a state. That's what you've got: materialism, that man can finally be eternal, or immortal. You know, Allen [Tate] used to quarrel with Edmund Wilson, he believed in that: the perfectibility of man, Wilson did. But you know what the question is: *When? When?* And in the meantime you've got to make all these sacrifices at somebody else's pleasure, or interest, toward that end.

It's a kind of satanic thing. They deny the nature of things, that there's dark and light, pain and pleasure, day and night, male and female. . . . They deny all that, to say that there's just goodness, what's wrong is some mechanical difficulty. That's what we're confronted with.

Bell: What do you think about Lyle Lanier saying we might come back to a more agrarian type of society?

Lytle: I think it's going to blow up first. I don't think it can come back now—the grounds for it have been destroyed. Particularly in the South, the smaller farmers, people like that. You take Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, when they bought out the old Lytle house and tore it down and put a Carnation milk plant there, then there were 30,000 milk cows in the county. Not any there now. The plant has been torn down, itself, don't you see? I just think we have gone mad with this technology, and just making things.

Bell: Even in dairy farming now the cows are milked around the clock, they're never out to pasture, they just feed them.

Lytle: Just like the chickens. That's a horrifying thing. What we have done is violate nature. You make war on nature, you use it, you see. And when you do that you yourself become a kind of monster. It's a monstrous life, and in a way, you see the results of that in these people.

A family farm cannot be torn down to the money economy. We were at Cornsilk here in 1925 and '26; we had mules and horses to plow, and we grew our own fuel. We had one tractor to disc with because loose ground was hard on the workstock. But then, you didn't have any rent to pay. And you grew a great deal of your own food. But you just cannot be dependent on the world market. Just to be on the money economy, no way for a farm to do that and survive. In the first place you've got to consider seasons. You can have drought; you can have too *much* water. You pay $80- or $90,000 for one of these big tractors and have a 300-acre farm, why, there is no possible way not to go under the hammer like they do out there in the West.

And when *I'll Take My Stand* came out, it was about 50-50, the chance was possible for some kind of restraint, by slowing down the speed of change.

Bell: Did the down side of it all turn out as you expected it might in 1930?

Lytle: Oh no. We couldn't imagine it being as bad as it is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now. You know, we were just protesting. The only thing that brought us into the public view was the Great Depression. And it came out about that time, so we seemed prophets. At least, not prophets then, but they think we were prophets now.

Bell: When did you get involved with the *I'll Take My Stand* project?

Lytle: Well, that was the year I graduated. Red [Robert Penn Warren] was at Oxford. I was around Nashville then. . . . That's the first writing, really serious writing, that I ever did, and I did it right on that table yonder.

I was interested in it, and there was a good deal of talk done, among Don [Donald Davidson] and John [Crowe Ransom], and they corresponded with Allen [Tate] in Europe. Allen got back and said, "I can get a contract with *Harper's* while I'm here."

I just took it for granted I was taken into it—they didn't know that until they had seen what I could do. We talked, and Don didn't want to sign the contract. I don't know why—Allen felt that Don would never bring anything to a conclusion, though they were great friends. So John and I went and sent a telegram to sign the contract. And I came and wrote my part here.

That's how I got into it. I was very bumptious—I sort of confronted Don on that. It was the time when if you didn't do it, it would never have been done. That is what, certainly, John and I felt.

Bell: Was Davidson a professor at Vanderbilt then?

Lytle: Yes. He was also John's student, did you know that? They were at war and came out. . . . I don't know when he was a student. He was a good teacher. He didn't think I was much of a scholar. I took that sophomore class in English, and Davidson always shook his head at me. I was a dancing man in those days, fooled around. He only gave me a C. And I never took a class with him again.

Bell: When did you first fall in with Allen Tate?

Lytle: I can tell you exactly that. He was a senior when I was a freshman at Vanderbilt. And he and Red roomed together, they met in Curry's office, there. I didn't know him. I was a dancing man in those days, didn't think about writing. John Ransom wrote me at Yale and wrote Allen at 27 Bank Street, and that is where it came about; I came down. Allen lived in the basement floor of Bank Street, and got that half rent-free for keeping the furnace. So we got to talking about the monkey trial, and we agreed about it, as did our philosophy professor, Dr. Sanborn. We saw each other for the first time there.

Bell: So you didn't know him from *The Fugitive*?

Lytle: No, he wasn't there, then, you see, he was gone. I went to *The Fugitive* my senior year, but I didn't write verse, although I did try, and John Ransom was good enough to publish some, rather poor verse, which Allen accused him of. Allen of course had left, and he went up to his brother's. Ben Tate had a coal business. See, Allen's father bought all that coal land up in Kentucky and West Virginia, and Ben developed it. And Allen shipped a car of coal in the wrong direction and Ben fired him. And, of course, it was an unconscious kind of movement. Allen had no business fooling around with coal and all. Any kind of business. He couldn't even see those 12 tomato plants drooping at Benfolly—he would go right by them and never see them.

Bell: You've done a good deal of teaching here and there. Do you think it's a good thing for writers to be absorbed into the colleges the way that they have been?

Lytle: I think you've got to be with people who are doing the same thing. I don't think you ever talk about what you're doing while you're doing it. If you did, you would never do it. But you have to talk around it, don't you see, and like that.

Bell: Was it in Florida that you taught Flannery O'Connor?

Lytle: No, that was in Iowa, she was out there. Paul Engle brought me out there for two spring terms. I ran that place the second term.

Bell: What was she like as a student?

Lytle: Oh, Flannery, she was a fine student. She was already working on a novel; I worked with her on that, and she would listen. I think I learned more than she did. I was given her stuff to read when I came there because they knew I could pronounce "chitlins." There I discovered that you never let the student read his own work. The friends will say it is good; the enemies say it's bad. So when I taught I always read their work myself.

I enjoyed it out there. I remember Flannery was such a puritan, she was one of those Catholic puritans. She had in that story ("A Stroke of Good Fortune"), remember, this woman who was pregnant, walks up the stairs—just a wonderful scene. In that, she put the boy in bed with the woman at first. And I tried to say, "It's not done that way. You can't get away with it." So what she did: she put a hat on his head and made a comic scene of it. I remember that.

We talked. I didn't know anything much about how to teach then, and she talked about it, that helped.

Bell: There isn't any love in O'Connor's work; do you think that's a limitation?

Lytle: Yes, it's a limitation—it's her limitation. But with her use of the grotesque, the enveloping action is clear; this is what happens when you have only materialism as the common belief of society.

Bell: I read where you said that a writer has only one true subject—what's yours?

Lytle: I don't know. But I think your writing of it is an effort to discover it. Some who have written about me think it is the fall from innocence, the Garden of Eden myth.

We have lost the sense of when every man and woman was a craftsman. That was the Christian inheritance. My sense of that now theologically is that that's why man has something divine in him. It's not that he is made in the image of God—a mosquito is made in the image of God. Such diverse images. That's a poor theology.

So my feeling is that an artist puts the best part of himself—I don't mean his personality, but his very being—in his work. In his artifact. And I think that God, if He made man (He certainly didn't beget him), then He put the best of himself in. And so that's the only divine thing in human creatures.

So the writer of the Garden of Eden failed in a sense—he brought Adam and Eve alive. Now, two naked people can't live together and not know what they're doing, you see; there is no possible way to do that. So I think they were like angels, they were emanations, else there's no point to eating the apple. Because when they ate the apple, they became knowledgeable of themselves, they came alive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Their eyes opened. That is, they were no longer innocent, they took on the body of flesh and then, the garden of innocence, they were out of it. They were then wayfarers in the world, you see. So my feeling is—*it seems so ridiculous that the beginning of the world is based on disobedience*. It just doesn't make any sense at all.

Bell: People think of the story of the Garden of Eden as a tragedy. You're saying it isn't?

Lytle: It's not a tragedy, it's just the beginning of life. In the beginning of life you have comedy and tragedy too. But it seems to me you cannot fall from innocence, no way to. You quicken into living, and you fall into, you enter, the wilderness of time.

That's a mighty broad subject. I'm going to make some biscuits, if you'll cut the ham. Can you all eat some ham? The turkey is, well, not deliquescent, I hope it's not, but we might best avoid it.

SPEAKING TRUE *by Paul Ramsey*

"Three million years
The Spirit, ranging as it will,
In sun, in darkness, lives in change.
Changed and not changed. The spirit hears
In drifting fern the morning air."
—Janet Lewis, "Fossil, 1975"

What is it that poetry does and is? We can say that poetry is about why people do things, and about what we know, and don't know, of human motive. We can also say that poetry is in language, sounded, and that poems should *say* what they mean and be the right and exact locution for what is said, that the sound should echo and be echoed by and be of the meaning. An ideal? Yes, in good poetry approached, sometimes nearly. Poetry is a way of speaking true, and the truth is of sound and vision, the rhetoric fitting the truth a poem conveys and is.

What do we know of human motive? There is a tale I retell in a poem of mine entitled *Fog Days for Great Cranberry Island*:

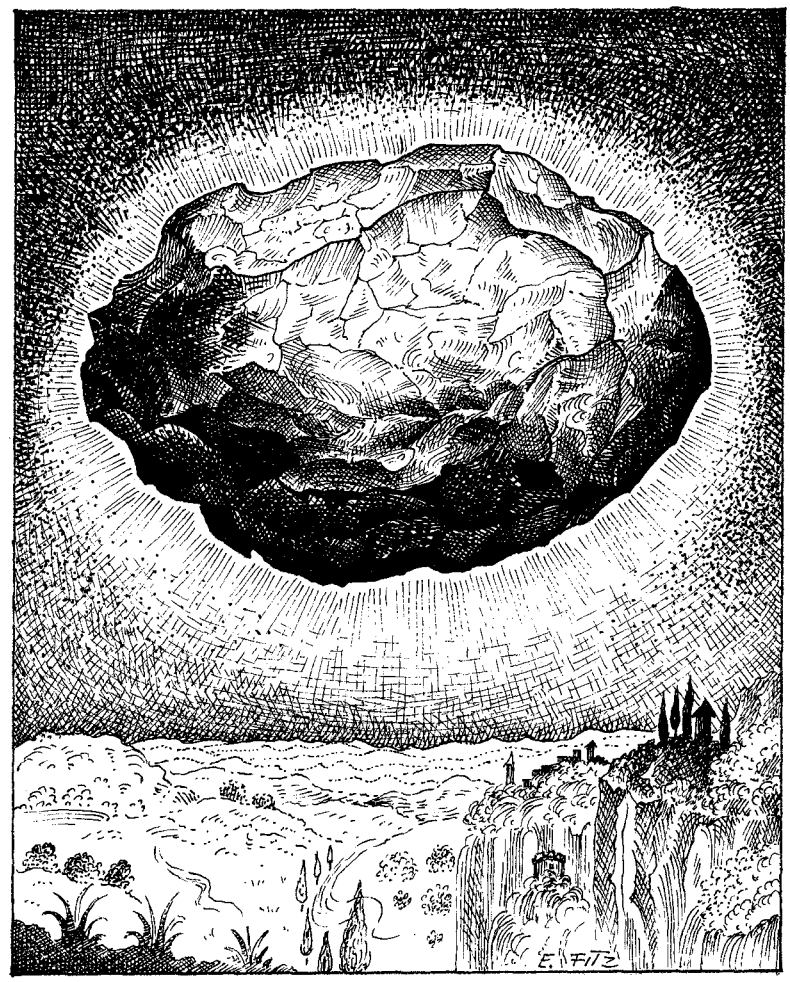
> And on the south end of the island still mist,
> then fog.
> There has been mist on the place of the
> Prussian lady,
> Born Dorethea Albertina
> Called Hannah Caroline.
> When she heard that her husband had died in the
> Arctic she threw his stuffed seals in the bay.

The story really happened: at least my informants on Great Cranberry Island were quite sure that it really had, and some of them say that the stuffed seals were picked up by a ship and taken to Boston, where some of them are on display in a museum.

I tell the story to students and then ask about motives—fifth-grade students, college students, graduate students—and hear many of the same answers: because she loved him, or because she was tired of the seals, or because she resented his being a sea captain and traveling far and dangerously, or various other notions and variations. Then I ask a trick question: "Well, will someone give me the Correct Answer?" and the response normally is resistance, more or less polite: "How can we tell the Correct Answer?" or "Who are you to think there is a correct answer?" or whatever. But there *is* a correct answer: *We don't know*. Or, as I finish the poem:

> When she heard her husband had died in the
> Arctic, she threw the stuffed seals in the bay.
> Whether out of grief or hatred, it is too late to say.

We might, with a lucky investigation, be able to say much better whether her motive was grief or hatred or both or



Paul Ramsey is poet in residence and Gerry Professor of English at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. This essay is adapted from his preface to Contemporary Religious Poetry *(Paulist Press).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boredom or whatever; maybe some letters could be discovered, or something else. But we know that, at best, we still would not be wholly sure. Human motive is locked in human breasts, to whose chambers with their recesses we have some, but not all keys.

Poetry, then, is an exploration and understanding of human motive. In that I agree with Yvor Winters that the best technique is that which makes a poem more true, more appropriate, more richly attuned to the motives discovered and unfolded. I hold, with Winters, that we can know and understand much of human motive and that good poetry expresses such understanding with singularly exacting power; I would also emphasize, perhaps even more than Winters, how much in human motive remains intractable, mysterious, hard to assess. And that is true of religious poetry as of any other: motive and mystery are integral to it, and not every rendition has the same power and integrity and exactitude as the best.

Poetry is a good, and evil is a privation of good. That theory, from Aquinas and others, does not cover everything or solve all problems, but it is powerful, useful, and in some deep senses true. I am fond of telling students that it is good to invent something, to express how one feels, to tell something which will (more or less) interest other people. Some poetry is much better than other, but poetry can really be bad only when it is pretentious, when it claims to be more than it is. Often one needs to tell a student, preferably gently and firmly, "Your poem is longer than it is."

Also, many poems claim to be more than they are. The truth that human motive is often unknowable or mysterious does not mean that anything goes, or that every obscure and bardic gesture about the mystery of things is necessarily valid.

A poem, then, *can* be true about human motive; and there are means of judging that—and how it handles language. Unfortunately, so much in current academic discussion and defense of Christian ideas and standards is tentative and defensive. Are there not some things we may proclaim?

We often say we are fallible; we make mistakes; we are not sure about much that we say; we learn and qualify and change our minds. *But* there's a trick in the language of fallibility, which can make us sound more skeptical or confused or unbelieving than we are. For, if by saying "we are fallible" we mean that we sometimes make mistakes, then by logical parity we should *equally* be entitled to say, "We are infallible," because we sometimes get things right, say that which is true. Of course we don't claim we are infallible and would be roundly scolded if we did, but the logical point is still relevant, both to our capacity for judging (poetry among other things) and making relevant distinctions in language (in and of poetry).

Poetry should have fit language, a "just and lovely image" of what the poem conveys and is, and that fitness, that appropriateness, takes long and is hard and good to achieve. It is done partially by adjusting language when it does not fit. The process continues, is philosophical, religious, human, and gets somewhere.

Here is one example. Sometimes we read in a newspaper that someone died unexpectedly. An unusual comment on that I once heard is, "No one ever dies unexpectedly." We know what the newspaper meant to say; but our sense of language and our lives and deaths are clearer for the adjustment. We do expect to die, and should learn to die well. Religious discourse, including poetry, has told us so for a long time.

Language does and does not fit reality, and the process of accommodation is perpetual, possible, fruitful, and our task. John Dryden tells us that poetry should be a just and lively *image* of reality, and Alexander Pope tells us that sound should be an echo to the sense. The only way that can be is for the sense to be in some way a sound. Echoes are sounds reflecting sounds. Language and meaning and reality stand apart and mutually enter.

Richard M. Gale, a philosopher responding to Henri Bergson's charge that our symbols distort reality, writes that Bergson's claim is true only in the trivial sense that "symbols are qualitatively different from their referents: the word 'amorous,' for example, is not itself warm and passionate. One does not say a physicist's vector diagram is a vicious distortion of reality because it does not get up and run around the room." But if a poet writes an amorous poem, we want it to be warm and passionate (or otherwise appropriate); and if a poet were to do a vector diagram, it *should* gallop about the room. We do what we can, as best we may.

Religious discourse or poetry is apt to provoke special claims and disclaimers, virtual frenzies of timidity. The Bible is not mealymouthed; theories of religious language often are. We are often told that our language for talking about God is inadequate and that we need metaphors, no metaphor wholly sufficing. We can overrate or underrate the place that "metaphor" has in our discourse. For instance, the term "literal" is a metaphor. But we still can speak. When a Christian says, "Jesus of Nazareth *is* God," the statement is in no sense metaphorically intended. We mean that it is true. And, certainly, it does not follow from our nervousness about metaphor and language that anything equally goes in speaking about God.

Language is language. The word *rabbit* does not exhaust rabbitness or include each rabbit, born or yet to be born, but still we are not free to substitute words at random for *rabbit*. I suggest that we treat God at least as well linguistically as we treat rabbits.

Karl Barth says in *The Faith of the Church* that God's hands are literal, ours metaphorical—an astonishingly wise thing to say. We are the "metaphor," God the reality. We are the vapor, God the Rock.

Aristotle writes in the *Poetics*, "to scatter seed is to sow, but the scattering of the sun's rays has no name. But the act of sowing in regard to grain bears an analogous relation to the sun's dispersing of its rays, and so we have the phrase 'sowing the god-created fire.'" Aristotle perceives a hole in language, and promptly closes it. That sun sows light on the problem of understanding our language, knowledge, and faith, even now.

As an enthusiast in philosophy, I respect the work of Wittgenstein and Peter Geach and Max Black and Paul Holmer and G.E.M. Anscombe and Aristotle and Aquinas and John Wisdom and others who have helped us see how language can be used to clarify, to strengthen, to understand, not just to speculate and entangle and doubt. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

linguistic movement in philosophy early on was deeply positivistic and anti-Christian; it has changed and grown since.

I am an optimist philosophically, a Christian in Faith, and the two meet, and I rejoice. One of our tasks is to make our language more adequate by thought, distinction, reflection, caring, love.

Here is a poem: "Each Day," by Sister Maura.

Her face thins almost
as we watch. Bones

seem larger—grating
on pillow and sheet

like shells on a ledge
of shore. We speak

more simply in her presence:
a primer of nouns

and verbs. She lets go
of life gently. We

receive from her hands
the victory of belief,

learning the meaning of
our lives from our grief.

In granting permission to republish some poems of hers, Sister Maura wrote me, "I'm glad that you chose 'Each Day.' When I give a reader, or when readers comment on the book that it is in, it is that poem which they say is the one they remember. It is, I suspect, close to the human heartache that, at some time, we all share."

Which is a lovely reply that virtually constitutes a definition of religious poetry: poetry which speaks to our hearts, gives light to our sorrow, and speaks true.

MR. ELIOT'S DREAMS *by Peter Laurie*

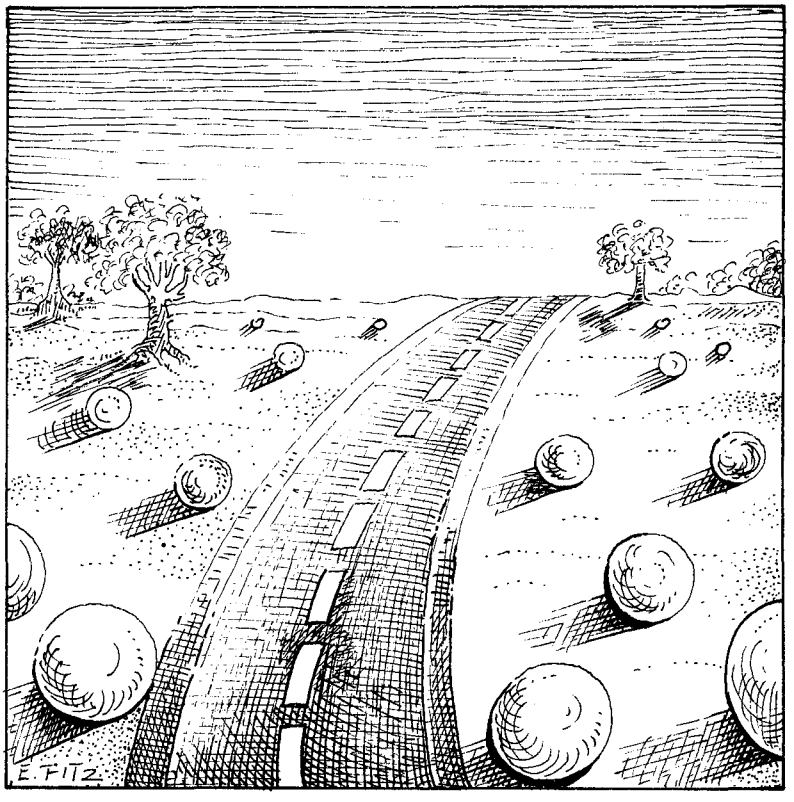
"Le rêve est une seconde vie."

—Nerval

T.S. Eliot has become so thoroughly exalted, especially among conservative intellectuals, as the greatest poetic avatar of Western civilization in modern times (a role he must share, though, with Yeats and Pound) that it may shock many to notice the unmistakable oriental elements embedded in even his most overtly Christian works. It happens these same elements also inform his early and patently *anti*-Christian verse as well. Accordingly, I intend no slight to the great traditions of the Christian West (neither did Eliot) by trying, in brief compass, to give some indication of where and what those elements are.

First, there is probably no better way to go desperately astray in the study of Eliot's verse than to try to read his almost absurdly conventional body of criticism into it. Unfortunately, this is precisely what some of this poet's admirers have done, producing an effect of dogmatic certitude almost entirely *at odds* with the extremely *disturbing* texture of Eliot's poetic. Eliot, perhaps even more than the overtly atheistic modernists, is a poet of inconceivable disruptions of traditional continuities, a quiet forewarner of understated Apocalypse, an affirmer of Christendom in the face of its obvious collapse from within. Yet in this faithless age, Eliot became a poet of faith. And exposure to extra-occidental influence had something to do with this.

When Thoreau broke the ice with Whitman in Manhattan ("You seem to have come under the influence of the oriental philosophers"—a New Englandly transcendental remark if ever there was one), Whitman's thoroughly un-Harvard-Yardly reply was "Oh? *Tell* me about them!" By contrast, but in the same spirit of guileless grace, the sophisticated Mr. Eliot, who had studied a little Sanskrit at "The Place" with Irving Babbitt, parried a late challenge that his Christianity seemed a great deal more like Buddhism with, "Perhaps I've not been found out yet?"—a nonchalance in keeping with his general disavowal of the importance of poetry itself ("Poetry is a mug's game").



Peter Laurie is a poet and scholar whose work has appeared in Poetry, St. Andrews Review, *and the* Harvard Advocate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He may have meant *life* is a mug's game. A universal illusion-disillusion is central to all Eliot's verse. He faces not only modernity's forced reappraisal of the West's now-staggering heritage (that man is a perfectible creature of reason, say, making "progress" in a coherent moral creation presided over by a caring and available Creator) but also faces an interior crisis of consciousness, as well:

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors.

Which in Sanskrit would have been called a recognition of *máyá* (illusion)—that reality itself is finally nothing but a convincing dream we are *willing* ourselves to believe in, a "wilderness of mirrors," in which we are so absorbed that we cannot awake.

Paradoxically, dreams are also considered to form the language of an immortal, higher existence (here Buddhism and Platonism are virtually agreed), and it is in this sense that the *word* "dream" appears in Eliot's verse with astonishing frequency:

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear.

Swinging between life and death
Here, in death's dream kingdom
The waking echo of confusing strife
Is it a dream or something else
When the surface of the blackened river
Is a face that sweats with tears?

Wavering between the profit and the loss
In this brief transit where the dreams cross
The dream-crossed twilight between birth
and dying . . .

These are not daydreams, drug hallucinations, or (as the Freudians would have it) "thinly disguised death-wishes." Not only is the use of the term "dream" very technical here, indicating prophecy and visionary experience analogous to Cavalcanti's and Dante's, but the place itself (the same in each passage) is real. The phrase "death's dream kingdom," which clearly *appealed* to Eliot, indicates a specific psychic state between life and death, exactly like the pagan Underworld of Homer, Vergil, and Dante—though Eliot undoubtedly "knew" those poets microscopically, it is the lived experience that impresses in these passages—and for this stunningly vivid place Buddhism has a term: it's called *bardo*, or gap.

As it happens, there is exactly *no* possibility that Eliot cribbed a knowledge of the bardo from Sanskrit, since the doctrine was developed in Tibetan and translated (almost unreadably and incomprehensively) for the first time *after* Eliot's passages were composed. It would have required a greater miracle to derive these haunted and concentrated images from Evans-Wentz than to have made them up, though Eliot's not inventing here. He's doing what true poets do: writing down what he *sees*. This is one place you can't describe without having been there. Notice in all these passages the persistence of disembodied eyes:

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river
Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men

The apparition of these eyes as cause of hope, hope of deliverance from this dismally barren plane that is not (as in the Christian view) *after* death but *between* life and death, cannot be explained by any orthodox manipulation of Christology. Only in the canzoni of Guido Cavalcanti, the avowed heretic, do we come even close. The rose, we may feel, has been merely borrowed from Dante's Paradiso, whose Christian Good News has been willfully (demonically) inverted. Yet that is not adequate to explain the psychic desperation evoked here, which turns on the notion "empty" in an absolute contrivance of dirge about "lost kingdoms" (hardly the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires) titled "The Hollow Men."

There *are* some tangible sources, of course, and they are even mentioned in the "notes" to *The Waste Land*. The effigies "Leaning together / Headpiece filled with straw" are discussed in the "Adonis, Attis, Osiris" sections of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. They are fashioned to represent these various grain-cult gods (who are the same god) in the other-worldly interval between death and rebirth. So they are not descriptions of *modern* men at all, though Eliot undoubtedly intends us to take them so. They are certainly puppets, and though it is specifically implied that "we" are not "lost / Violent souls" (i.e., we're not even alive enough to be damned), it is the notion of the soul at all that matters.

In the conception of *nous* made explicit in Plato and adopted by the great medieval Fathers as a perfect predescription of Christ's teaching, there are *three* minds—mundane mind, soul, and spirit—operating on three distinct planes of being: the material, the dream, and the light of divine mind itself. We deal *here* with soul, whose modality is dream. In the East what *we* have always called soul has been traditionally known as the body of dream, capable of separation from the physical body and of direct knowledge even before death, on that plane called *bardo*.

It is to this bardo-plane that Eliot's imagery has brought us, not for reasons of intellectual exhibitionism but because he has simply been there himself. The dream-body and the faculty of dreaming have both structure and purpose (about which Freud, the Romantics, and today's druggies have all equally been wrong), by having made contact with dream, people with no physical approximation at all in disparate ages of man have been able to come to remarkably like conclusions about the otherwise hidden aspects of being in the cosmos. So, in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the vision of disembodied eyes—Eliot's hope—does occur. The eyes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appear precisely in the context of that mysterious quality of "empty" that the poet cites—not in despair (as we persist in misreading) but in *hope*.

What we want to believe Eliot said, that the vision of eyes in the rose is empty men's only hope, is not at all what he *has* said. What he has said is that this vision may be the hope *only* of empty men, that men are hopeful only when emptied—emptied of all illusion, emptied of the notion of self, emptied of the consuming desire that has—as in the Buddha's Fire Sermon that forms the core of *The Waste Land*—set all the objects of this world on fire. This is exactly what takes place in the unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes*, with its grim insistence that life consists only of "birth, copulation, and death," and its explicit epigraph from the mystical poet St. John of the Cross:

> Hence the soul cannot be possessed of divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created things.

The Buddha had a term for this, what Eliot calls

> A condition of complete simplicity
> (Costing not less than everything) . . .

The term is *sūnyatā*. It means emptiness.

This emptiness is *not* the same as existential nothingness (it is its exact opposite) though the fashionable nothing-world does figure heavily in Eliot's work as an object of satire:

> In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels
> The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,
> The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,
> And the wind shall say: "Here were decent
> godless people:
> Their only monument the asphalt road
> And a thousand lost golf balls."

The Buddhists' emptiness is a form of cosmic modesty. Nor is there really any doubt that Eliot actually possessed it. ("Poetry is a mug's game.") By contrast, Allen Ginsberg and Robert Duncan (who both have tried to siphon off for their own aggrandizement the New Age faddishness of Tantrism-mania) are certainly mugs—reveling in the Kali Yuga (the Age of Putrefaction) whose prophets they presume to be. But they are not poets.

Opening the heritage of the West to the East, Eliot was able to renew the faith purchased for us with the blood of Christ, and so

> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual . . .

and it is the divine body that can make such a union for us if we still desire it.

Perhaps, as Eliot intimated so slyly after all his poems had been written, printed, and endlessly explained by those whose self-importance depends upon such things, he *hasn't* been found out yet? Perhaps it's time he were?

As goes the American Family, so goes our nation.

The strength and resilience of the American Family is quite simply the single greatest asset our nation possesses.

Long battered, neglected, maligned, and divided, the American Family's regeneration as a powerful center for values, achievement, and fulfillment is an unmistakable signal: **a good idea whose time has come. Again.**

That's why a *new* publication is chronicling events, floodlighting the issues, debunking the bureaucrats and social experimenters, and talking common sense.

This monthly publication is called *The Family in America.*

Shocking. Provocative. Eye-opening. Combative. Thoughtful. And, when necessary, outrageous.

The Family in America is all this and more as, each month, its editors grapple with fundamental issues affecting your family's future.

Each month, *The Family in America* will:

- **joust** with the bureaucrats and martinets who muddle public policy affecting the American Family;
- **expose** governmental tinkering and doublespeak on family issues;
- **probe** the underlying statistics and trends running in favor of your family – and against it;
- **reveal** the works and exceptional research of today's best and brightest scholars, writers, educators.

If you think it's important to be informed about the forces that may affect the health and well-being of your family now and in the years ahead, the choice is a simple one.

Take pen in hand, and subscribe now.

Request your subscription today.

For fast ordering call toll free (800) 892-0753 IL (800) 435-0715 Outside IL

The Family in America
ABSOLUTELY "YES!" Count me in!

☐ Yes! Please enter my subscription to *The Family in America* at $14.97 for 12 monthly issues. I save $6.03 off the basic rate of $21.
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

Name

Address

City State Zip

Canadian and foreign orders add $6 per year, payable in U.S. funds only.

Please allow 4-6 weeks for your first copy to arrive. Mail coupon to: P.O. Box 416, Mt. Morris, IL 61054

TF 368

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TIME *by Jocelyn Tomkin*

"I wanna go back and do it all over
But I can't go back I know
I wanna go back 'cause I'm feeling so much older
But I can't go back I know"
—Popular song by Eddie Money
(1986, CBS Inc.)

Mostly we take space for granted so long as we have enough of it. But what about time? The Romans said "*tempus fugit*" and said it all, or at least most of it. It is difficult to say more without getting tautological; but we can say that time has only duration so it must be one-dimensional. The natural division of time into past, present, and future, which we often picture as a straight line with a point marking the present, the past stretching back along the line, and the future stretching ahead, expresses time's one-dimensional nature.

Jocelyn Tomkin is on the staff of the astronomy department at the University of Texas.

What about space *and* time? How are they related? A tough question; it's fair to ask if it is meaningful. Is there any reason to expect them to be related? Common sense suggests that, indeed, they must be linked together somehow. For instance, when we make an appointment to meet someone we state not only a place, but also a time.

But as to what the relationship might be, this is much less clear. The fact that Isaac Newton did not get it right suggests that the situation is far from straightforward. Only at the beginning of this century, stimulated by the discoveries of 19th-century physics, did physicists realize exactly how time fits into the scheme of things. The world doesn't consist of a three-dimensional space with time as a separate unrelated entity, but is a fusion of space and time in which time is the fourth dimension. Hermann Minkowski, who first discussed the properties of unified space-time, opened his address to the 1908 Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians with a clear statement: "The views of space and time which I wish to lay before you have sprung from the soil of experimental physics, and therein lies their strength. They are radical. Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality."

Minkowski did much more than merely state that time is the fourth dimension. He tamed time by showing how to convert an interval of time into an equivalent of space and so put things on a quantitative footing, like a good scientist should. He demonstrated that the conversion factor is the speed of light. Thus an interval of time is equivalent to the distance that light travels during that time. Because of light's enormous speed (186,000 miles per second), a little time is "worth" an immense distance—one second corresponds to 186,000 miles, for example. We all know that "time is money," but nobody says that "distance is money," so perhaps, in a way, folk wisdom anticipated Minkowski.

The establishment of the relationship between time and space does not imply that time is a type of space. It isn't. Time and space by themselves "are doomed to fade away into mere shadows" in Minkowski's eloquent phrasing, but nonetheless they are separate shadows; time is time, and space is space.

Developments since Minkowski's time have confirmed his space-time description of the world. Einstein's theory of general relativity, which is a theory of gravity, adopts Minkowski space-time as an essential preliminary ingredient. Einstein did not "explain" gravity any more than Newton "explained" gravity, but he did provide a better description of gravity. Einstein's theory does everything that Newton's does, and then some.

Einstein did not modify or extend Newtonian theory but took an entirely new approach in which Newton's gravitational force is superseded by curvature of space-time. From Einstein's viewpoint the apple didn't fall on Newton's head because of a gravitational force between the apple and the Earth, but because the mass of the Earth curves space-time in the Earth's vicinity, and the apple's falling was a manifestation of this curvature. The space-time that is being curved by the Earth's presence is Minkowski space-time. In outer space, far away from massive bodies like the Earth,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

apples don't fall off apple trees because space-time assumes the undistorted, or "flat" form of Minkowski space-time.

When Einstein proposed the general theory of relativity in 1916, science, technology, and mankind's exploration of the universe were still so primitive that there was almost no overlap between the theory's predictions and observation. In fact the only point of contact was a peculiarity in the orbit of the planet Mercury.

Mercury, Earth, and the other planets all pursue elliptical orbits around the Sun. Thus, as a planet orbits the Sun, it moves from a point of closest approach to the Sun, called perihelion, out to a point of greatest distance, called aphelion, and then back to perihelion. In the case of Mercury the difference between its perihelion and aphelion distances from the Sun—29 million versus 43 million miles—is nontrivial and is a result of the little planet's pronouncedly elliptical orbit. Somewhat surprisingly, Mercury's orbit is not fixed.

Although the planets are all much less massive than the Sun and therefore have correspondingly tiny gravitational influences, each planet exerts its own small gravitational effect on the others, and each planet, in its turn, responds to the combined gravitational effects of all the other planets. Thus a planet's orbit is calculated as if it is alone in orbit around the Sun—the gravitational master of the solar system—and then the small gradual changes due to the presence of the other planets are calculated as departures, or "perturbations," from the simplified one-planet-on-its-own picture. One effect of the other planets' gravitation is that Mercury's orbit slowly rotates in its own plane. This means that successive orbits of Mercury do not exactly repeat each other but build-up a rosette-like pattern. Astronomers, who use the direction from the Sun to a planet's perihelion as one of the measures that fix the orientation of the planet's orbit, see this as a progressive change of Mercury's perihelion, which they label "precession of perihelion."

In the second half of the 19th century it became apparent that Mercury's perihelion was precessing slightly faster than expected, and by the start of this century thorough analysis of Mercury's orbit had shown that its anomalous perihelion precession was 43 arcseconds per century. (A circle is divided into 360 degrees; a degree into 60 arcminutes; and an arcminute into 60 arcseconds.) The effect, which corresponds to completion of a full circle in three million years, was of minute proportions. Not only did the 19th-century celestial mechanics notice the discrepancy, but they measured it accurately—a tribute to the keenness of their instruments and calculations (all done by hand). As the innermost planet of the solar system, Mercury lies closest to the Sun and therefore, of all the planets, it experiences the greatest curvature of space-time that the solar system has to offer, so it was no coincidence that it was the first planet to betray noticeable non-Newtonian behavior.

In spite of the slightness of Mercury's deviation from good Newtonian form, it had prompted astronomers to advance a variety of explanations for the puzzle. None of them, however, had much observational basis or any general acceptance.

It was at this point that Einstein and his general theory of relativity arrived on the scene. The physicist Clifford Will describes things as follows:

> In November, 1915, while struggling to put the finishing touches on the general theory, Einstein was well aware of the problem of Mercury, and it was one of the first calculations he carried out using the new theory. To his delight, he found a precession of 43 arcseconds per century! He later wrote, "for a few days I was beside myself with joyous excitement," and told a colleague that the discovery had given him palpitations of the heart.

Since then, the development of science and mankind's exploration beyond the Earth have provided new tests of Einstein's theory. The most demanding of these experiments involved the American Viking soft-lander on Mars. Accurate measurements of the time taken for radio signals to travel from Earth to the Viking space-probe on the Martian surface and back to Earth have shown that the Sun's curvature of space-time in the inner solar system agrees with the general relativity prediction to one part in a thousand.

This success was a success not only for Einstein but also for Minkowski. Einstein's theory presupposed Minkowski's flat space-time—because gravity curves space and time together, not separately, any description of gravity as a curvature of space-time can be successful only if Minkowski put space and time together successfully in the first place.

Einstein's theories of relativity are, at their core, *theories of invariance*, not relativity. "Invariance" in his theories says that the particular situation of the observer should not affect his description of physical laws. The laws of physics, as perceived by an observer cruising along the highway in a limousine and another observer sitting at the side of the highway, should be the same. This simple but very powerful idea guided Einstein toward both his theories of so-called relativity. Arnold Sommerfield, the distinguished physicist and colleague of Einstein, remarked that: "Relativity theory is accordingly an *Invariantentheorie* of the Lorentz group. The name relativity theory was an unfortunate choice: the relativity of space and time is not the essential thing, which is the independence of laws of nature from the viewpoint of the observer."

In 1987, and in the same vein, physicist David Jackson wrote: "The whole worldview of modern theoretical physics can be traced back to the fundamental postulate or idea that physical phenomena do not change just because you happen to be moving by, instead of standing still, when observing them."

The misnomer of Einstein's theories has caused the widespread impression that they somehow support a universal relativism. They do not. The parallel between the worlds of physical science and human conduct is a very dubious one, and, if it is made, it argues in favor of absolutism, not relativism.

But what about time? Although science has successfully unified space and time, nonetheless time remains utterly different from space. It flows. Time can be multiplied by any constant you choose, but it won't stop flowing.

Where does this flow come from? Is it something happening in the external world, or is it something imposed on the world by the mind? Is time a river or is life a journey?

Science gives a clear answer. Life is an immense journey

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the spirit; what we see as the flow of time is a consequence of our spirits' flight through time. When we consider the external world as a four-dimensional proposition, then time's flow and associated conventions, such as past, present, and future, evaporate. (No criticism of humble, and often easily dismissed, convention is intended. Rather, it is suggested that convention is the stuff of life.) Mathematician Hermann Weyl described the four-dimensional situation as follows: "The objective world simply *is*, it does not *happen*. Only to the gaze of my consciousness, crawling upward along the life line of my body, does a section of this world come to life as a fleeting image in space which continuously changes in time."

This seems a little unreal, but, nonetheless, it is an inescapable implication of the way space and time go together. Weyl's use of the word "crawling," however, may be questioned on grounds of insufficient dynamism. If one second is the time equivalent of 186,000 miles of distance, then evidently the mind doesn't crawl through time, but moves along lickety-split.

Neither Weyl nor science were the first to see life this way. "Man springs out of nothing, crosses time, and disappears forever in the bosom of God" was Tocqueville's view of life. And Rilke said: "*L'avenir est fixé, cher Monsieur Kappus, c'est nous qui sommes toujours en mouvement dans l'espace infini.*" He wrote this in 1904—four years before Minkowski's 1908 lecture identifying time as the fourth dimension and 22 years before Weyl's writings—so, although Rilke's words are astonishingly similar to Weyl's, they are a poet's independent statement rather than an echo of science's nascent rumblings of discovery.

Although the notion that "the objective world simply *is*, it does not *happen*," has a hard strangeness, its implication that the flow of time is much more subjective than objective is not so strange when we think about it.

Undoubtedly our experience of time takes place on multiple levels. A biological clock must be a foundation stone and very likely our mind is able to read this clock better than is generally supposed. Many people know the experience of wanting to wake up in the morning at a certain time, but, for some reason, not being able to use an alarm clock. "I must wake up at 7:00," they say to themselves before going to sleep, and come the morning, presto, they wake up within a couple of minutes of 7:00. But the flow of time is much more than a matter of biological clocks. At the mind's higher levels, where life is actually lived, where we love and hate, have successes and failures, the flow of time becomes a very subjective business—a matter of spirit, of passion, and of emotion.

When our spirit is aroused it grips the fabric of time very differently than when it is relaxed. When we are positively engaged with the external world, we stride through time. If we are in love and in the company of our loved one, on an adventure with friends, or within sight of a long-sought-after objective, time seems to zip by so that we don't even notice it. But when we are negatively engaged with the world—if circumstances become threatening—our spirit dawdles, and time drags. Most people know how five minutes in the dentist's chair can seem like five hours of mundane existence elsewhere. And the presence of the threat of violent death almost freezes time. In *Life and Fate*, Vasily Grossman, who was a World War II war correspondent, describes the hellish fighting at Stalingrad: "The distortion of the sense of time during combat is something still more complex. . . . And as for hand-to-hand fighting—that takes place quite outside time."

These examples of time's elasticity in life as we experience it, as the bittersweet adventure it is, square with a flow of time that springs from the mind, not the external world. The view is far from new. It bubbles under the surface of ordinary language, often bursting into the open in everyday sayings, such as: "Life is a journey, not a destination."

What is new is that the description of life as an active journey now rests on the sure quantitative foundation of exact empirical science. Science has no idea what consciousness is, but, whatever it is, movement through time must be its key aspect. We can no more stop our headlong rush into the future and continue to live than an airplane can stop its motion through the air and stay in the sky.

The implications of this, however, have not sunk in to the scientific or the medical or the general awareness. Sleep, for instance, is a subject where, very likely, the realization that life is an odyssey of the spirit will aid understanding.

Articles about sleep in learned journals or encyclopedias suggest that it is a mysterious business—its purpose unknown. For example, Dr. Allan Rechtschaffen of the University of Chicago, who has pursued sleep's secret with studies of crocodiles, rats, and humans, says: "Perhaps sleep does not have a function. . . . Perhaps we should accept our failure to isolate a specific function for sleep as evidence for nonexistence of a function. But it is hard to believe that we spend almost one-third of our lives in a behavioral state that has no function at all."

Conventionally, we think that we sleep because we are tired. When we say this we mean the physical fatigue that follows an active day, and we look on sleep as a natural respite. H.G. Wells expresses this view in "The War of the Worlds" when he describes the differences between Martians and humans: "Their physiology differed strangely from ours, their organisms did not sleep, any more than the heart of man sleeps. Since they have no extensive muscular mechanism to recuperate, that periodical extinction was unknown to them."

But if we keep the flight of the spirit that we know as life in mind, then the speculation that sleep's first purpose must be to rest the spirit, not the body, suggests itself. After all, it is the spirit, not the body, that moves through time; the body is the home in which the spirit dwells. One second of time is equivalent to 186,000 miles, so the 16 waking hours of a typical day are equivalent to 24,000 billion miles, or 11 round trips to Jupiter. Would you be puffed-out after making 11 nonstop round trips to Jupiter without any artificial aid whatsoever? You bet. Martians probably need sleep too.

The ravages of an epidemic that swept Europe and America in the 1920's reveal the close links between sleep, the flow of time, and life. This dreadful disease, a sleeping disorder known as encephalitis lethargica or sleeping sickness, first appeared in Europe in 1917, spread to America, and then faded away, so that by 1927 it had disappeared. In its wake the disease left five million victims of whom one third died. Those who succumbed died in a deep coma or in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an agonized sleeplessness beyond sedation.

Most survivors were devastated. All sorts of neurotic and psychotic disorders, including extreme and exaggerated forms of Parkinson's disease, dogged them. The neurologist Oliver Sacks, who has devoted himself to the clinical observation, care, and treatment of these people, describes their postepidemic fate: "The illness started to cool or congeal, and states of immobility and arrest, Parkinsonian, catatonic, melancholic, apathetic, started to roll in a great sluggish tide over the survivors, enveloping them in singular and scarcely accessible states of trance, abeyance, or stillness. Patients so affected were put away in chronic hospitals, nursing homes, lunatic asylums, special colonies—and totally forgotten."

The most unfortunate survivors never returned to life—for the most part they merely existed. In 1966, Dr. Sacks took charge of a group of postencephalitic patients at a suburban New York hospital, one of the very few remaining such groups in the world. He found that they were "motionless and speechless all day in their chairs, totally lacking energy, impetus, initiative, motive, appetite, affect or desire; they registered what went on about them without active attention, and with profound indifference" and concluded that lack of will "forms the empty heart of such states."

Clearly the inability to sleep made the disease's victims physically lethargic, but the crucial effect was the victims' loss of will; their loss of spirit. No longer able to sleep, their spirits had no respite from their flights through time so they became exhausted and went into suspension.

Treatment of these patients with L-DOPA, a drug used for the relief of Parkinson's syndrome, brought dramatic recovery. The patients regained their animation and interest in themselves and the world. "One patient, who had been totally transfixed physically and mentally for over thirty years, intensely rigid, completely motionless and mute, showed no reaction whatever as the dose was built up, and then suddenly—in the space of five seconds or less—'awoke,' jumped to her feet, ran down the corridor, and burst into voluble conversation with the dumbfounded nursing staff on her ward. . . . The first awakenings nearly always gave intense and unmixed joy to the patients." Sadly, many of these recoveries were not sustained. Although some patients enjoyed an enduring restoration to life, others tended to develop more or less severe behavior disorders within a few months of their awakening, in spite of continued treatment with L-DOPA.

Encephalitis lethargica robbed its victims not only of their spirits, but also their sense of time. In the most extreme cases they entered a timeless state devoid "of all sense of history and happening." After "awakening," one patient was full of allusions and stories all relating to 1926, "her last year of real life before her illness closed round her." When asked about this, "she said she knew perfectly well that it was 1969 and she was 64, but that she felt as if it was 1926 and she was 21, and that she couldn't imagine what it was like being older than 21."

Existence is an eventless drifting on the currents of time, while life is a flight through time. Encephalitis lethargica's ghastly effects suggest that sleep, far from being a functionless waste of time, makes the difference between existence and life; it is the key that transforms us from time's tumbleweeds into time's eagles.

The appreciation of life as a flight of the spirit through time may be novel and interesting; however, it may also seem to be rather exotic. Nonetheless, it has important consequences. We will conclude with consideration of one of them.

A feature of 20th-century Western civilization is the rationalist mentality—the low-grade, logical-positivist tone—of its intellectual and cultural elites. The general assumption, usually unstated, is that everything of importance in the external world and the life of the mind has been, or soon will be, put on a rational basis. Even God is expected to fall within the rationalist scope.

"How do you reconcile God's goodness and infinite power with suffering?" is one form of questioning God's design. Russian Communists of the 1920's, for example, argued that there could be no God because if there were, He would have arranged for the large Siberian rivers to flow south and water the arid lands of central Asia, instead of flowing north into the frozen Arctic wasteland.

The scientist, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine, Sir Peter Medawar puts it somewhat less crudely: "Nowhere is this incongruence [between transcendent answers and the world of experience] more apparent than in the problem of evil and of reconciling the idea of a benevolent God with the natural dispositions and events that are so difficult to reconcile with it."

In a recent conversation, Sidney Hook asked: "Is it expecting too much to ask that at some point as adults we would be blessed with the understanding to see the justice, if

Siren

by Frances Oliver

Once this voice like light falling
Through planes of amber, like the sound of shells
Boundless but intimate, a sea held beating
In a cupped hand, a resonance of light

Conjured the exile's island whose clear springs
Heal in a moment all the wounds there are,
The agate waters that no search can fathom
The shores whose every lantern is a star

Conjured the sunken bells, the submarine
Cathedral where the sky-robed pilgrims dance
The ghostly loves of young and haunted summers
The marsh-light truth teasing the mystic's trance

And in its crystal thread forever bound
Who heard it then, wanting no touch or token
Only the fevered spell to stay unbroken
Only the shining cadence of that sound

And never dreamt it but a trick of hearing
Like the shell's captive ocean, echoed flood
The tide and timbre of the listening blood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it exists, in the succession of events over which He rules so that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father knowing?" He amplified that if, perchance, he were to wake up in God's presence, he would say: "Lord, you didn't give me enough evidence."

A world in which God's design were intellectually accessible, a world where the Siberian rivers flowed south, would be very satisfying in many ways; it would also, of necessity, be a straitjacket. The human heart can feel God's presence, but to expect that human reason should be able to grasp His design is extremely unreasonable—and quite arrogant and silly. Among other things, it leaves no scope for mankind's further development.

The Earth is five billion years old. If we assume that the evolution of the Sun into a red giant will set the upper limit on the Earth's age, then it has about another five billion years to go. This does not necessarily set the upper limit on mankind's future. The possibility of travel to other stars with planetary systems of their own and the attendant prospect of migration to the solar systems of future generations of stars as yet unborn pushes this limit a factor of 10 or 20 further into the future. In this context mankind is extremely young; the species has just been born, and an enormous avenue of time beckons. Although many vicissitudes may lie along the way, it is reasonable to hope that mankind will travel down this avenue. Couple this prospect with a recollection of mankind's growth and achievements during the last 2,000 or 3,000 years and it is clear that the potential future growth of mankind's horizons, including his intellectual horizons, lies beyond our wildest imaginings.

A boundless prospect? Yes. But some reflection suggests that if God's design—even in only very hazy outline—lay within the grasp of 20th-century intellectuals, the future would look a lot more like a dead end. The discoveries and intellectual developments to come would uncover the plan in more and more detail, until, finally, it lay fully revealed. As God's plan, not any old plan, it would, in some sense, be a bedrock plan and therefore unchangeable. Life's meaning; the future, on timescales short and long; all would become transparent to human intellect. Everything—events small and large, in the near future or the distant future—would be predictable.

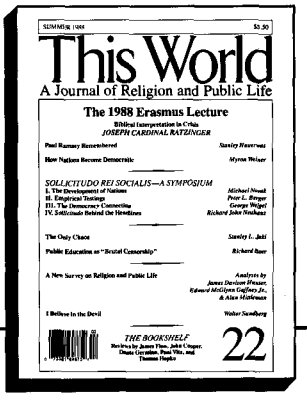
But in this place where everything was predictable, nothing could "happen" in the real sense of the word. As God's plan became fully accessible to the human intellect so the flow of time would dissipate and, ultimately, with the arrival of "full understanding," it would evaporate completely. It is hard to see how people in this dreaded state would differ from the zombies who survived encephalitis lethargica. In such a world only the children and the stupid would actually live.

Consideration of the flow of time and the big picture suggest that Balzac got it right when he said: "I believe in the incomprehensibility of God."

So, is this a call to abdicate from reason? A call to abandon individual responsibility and surrender to fatalism?

No, it isn't. As we travel along time's avenue we must use the light of intellect to show us the way. But we must remember that it is passion, not intellect, that powers us through time. The intellect is the handmaiden of the passions, and reason is only part, a small part, of intellect.

Our conjectures about time suggest that Western civilization's rationalist emphasis is overdone and misguided. It mistakes a secondary aspect of human nature for something primary and, as a result, it discusses many vital questions backwards.



INTRODUCTORY SAVINGS OFFER

☐ **YES!** Open my introductory trial subscription to **THIS WORLD** (four quarterly issues) for only $15 – I save $5 off the basic subscription rate. If I am not completely satisfied, I may cancel for a full, prompt refund on all unmailed copies.

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Please bill me.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

Mail to: **THIS WORLD**, P.O. Box 448, Mt. Morris, IL 61054 T882

Take a Fascinating Journey Into the Heart of America's Religious Spirit

You are invited to take a look at America's most influential journal devoted to the vital relationship between religion and public affairs.

Here's your opportunity to join the exceptional men and women who are participating in one of the most critical debates raging in America . . . the debate over the role of religion in today's society and our public life. Like no other reading experience you've ever encountered, **THIS WORLD: A Journal Of Religion and Public Life** is an intriguing, revealing journey into the heart of America's religious spirit!

But don't just take our word for it. See for yourself by trying **THIS WORLD** on an introductory, trial basis.

Order Now and Save $5.00

Mail this coupon and open a full-year's introductory subscription of four quarterly issues for only $15. That's $5 off the basic subscription rate – which is just like getting *one, huge, 150-page insight-packed issue absolutely free!*

What's more, if you are not completely satisfied with **THIS WORLD**, you may cancel for a full, prompt refund on all unmailed copies.

Don't delay. To receive your first issue as quickly as possible, send your coupon in today!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Portrait of the Artisan as a Young Man

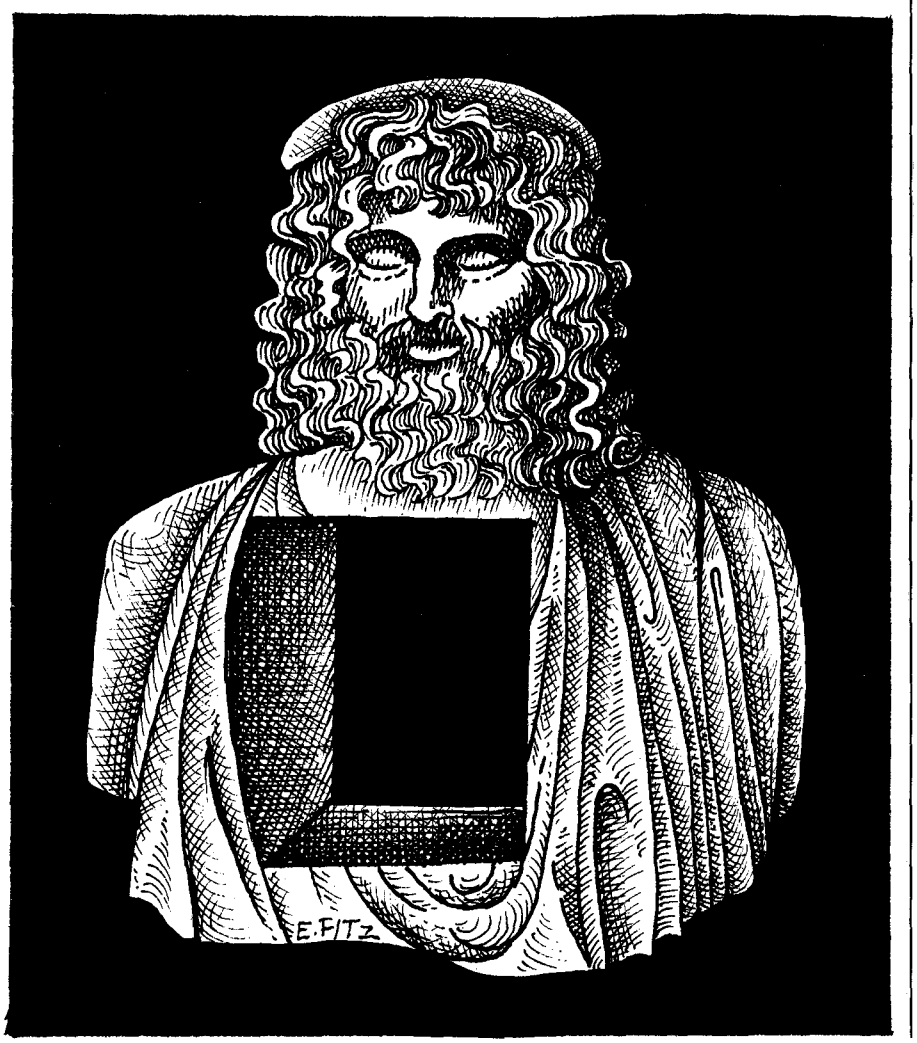
by Gregory J. Sullivan

"Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth"
—T.S. Eliot

Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939 **by Martin Stannard, New York: W.W. Norton; $24.95.**

Many 20th-century literary figures have undergone such exhaustive biographical treatment that a scholar wishing to venture into well-traversed territory is compelled to proffer a startling new thesis to vindicate his labors. All too frequently, alas, the "novel" approach is banal or strained—serving up a bit of latent homosexuality in one author, a touch of incipient feminism in another. At times, however, a new biography invites us to reexamine a writer's oeuvre (or at least a particular aspect of it) in a genuinely fresh way. Martin Stannard's *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years* 1903-1939, the first of a projected two-volume work, is just such an invitation; and the reason for this is Stannard's manifest seriousness of purpose: the biography "attempts," he says, "something which no other biographical study of Waugh has done: to forge a relationship between the crucial events of Waugh's life and his developing aesthetic." The ambitious objective requires scholarship that is at once industrious and discriminating; Stannard's efforts have both of these virtues, and his book is certainly the most definitive account to date of Waugh's early life and work.

Stannard patiently sketches Waugh's firmly middle-class background, quiet childhood (though there was a marked tension between father and son), and education. Further, he marshals the evidence to suggest that "Necessity, not vocation, drove [Waugh] to literature." This serves to illumine Waugh's desultory education at Lancing and his legendary dissolution at Oxford, where, assuming an aesthete's persona, he was preoccupied with extravagance and detestation of his tutor, C.R.M.F. Cruttwell. "Waugh's initial distaste for him," Stannard comments, "was tenderly nurtured into a fantasy of disgust." (Waugh's vituperation was carried over into his fiction: careful readers, for instance, will recall that Cruttwell's name is attached to minor but inevitably ludicrous characters, e.g., the bonesetter in *A Handful of Dust*.) After coming down with an unimpressive academic record, he muddled through disappointing teach-



Gregory J. Sullivan recently received his M.A. from Villanova University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing positions at obscure Arnold House and Aston Clinton. During this period, Waugh reluctantly began his writing career with his well-received biographical essay on Rossetti.

At this point in the book, Stannard's biographical design crystallizes. Waugh studied briefly at Heatherley's Art School, and though not a vocationally fruitful endeavor, it helped to provide him with what was to be an enduring aesthetic foundation, namely, the artist as artisan. "Waugh's attitudes were, and remained, those of the artist-craftsman," summarizes Stannard.

> Writer, painter, printer, carpenter—the object of all their labours was to produce useful, pleasurable, well-wrought objects. Nothing, as far as he could see, distinguished their essential function. A writer's business was not to confess or to proselytise or to render the states of heightened consciousness of sensitive introverts; it was to entertain and to inform.

And it was this "classical" approach that he brought to the writing of a trio of superbly comic novels: *Decline and Fall* (1928), *Vile Bodies* (1930), and *Black Mischief* (1932). Stannard says that with these works Waugh was emerging as a "serious writer," intent not only on satirical laceration but "as much interested in stylistic innovation as Joyce or Gertrude Stein. He was even concerned with the identical aesthetic problem of developing a new form of literary expression which banished the author's intrusive voice." (Stannard's sedulous collation of the extant manuscripts with the published texts reveals Waugh's deliberate excision of the authorial presence.)

Waugh's meticulous care in matters of form was coupled with a quickening concern for content: his conversion to Catholicism in 1930 was beginning to reverberate thematically in his fiction. Stannard is correct in observing that "All social structures in Waugh's fictional world tend towards collapse," but Catholicism brought Waugh to a darker, more penetrating apprehension of this process. It seems clear, moreover, that a significant part of the Church's attraction for Waugh (at least initially) was its embodiment of order in a civilization bent on anarchy. Ronald Knox—whose official biography Waugh was to write in 1959—noted in his *The Belief of Catholics* (1927): "Catholicism appeals, no longer to the antiquarian faddist or to the restless in search of spiritual adventure, but to the lovers of order. It beckons like a lifeboat to shipwrecked souls who have seen the conventions go down under their feet." Waugh echoed this view in a 1930 article defending his decision to convert, saying "that in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos." The battle lines were sharply drawn.

Waugh's embrace of Catholic order allowed him to see the intrinsic transience and absurdity of this world in the context of an authoritative theological system; in other words, "Decline and fall," as Stannard remarks, "were no longer the subject for jokes." Indeed, Waugh's ambivalence toward the chaos portrayed in his first three novels is conspicuously jettisoned in his finest achievement, *A Handful of Dust* (1934). Stannard notes the sophistication of Waugh's new emphasis: "This time, it seems, he wanted to write a novel which would unequivocally establish him as a writer in T.S. Eliot's camp, defending civilization against the barbarians." To be sure, *A Handful of Dust* doesn't employ the "mythic method" that is the hallmark of *The Waste Land*, but both works are premised on a view of modern man as secularized, deracinated from his fragmented civilization and its Christian foundation. Eliot interweaves desiccated modernity with the vanished grandeur of antiquity; Waugh juxtaposes Mr. Todd's Conradian savagery with the moral anarchy of contemporary London. Eliot, however, concludes with a movement in the direction of renewal ("Then a damp gust / Bringing rain"); Waugh is content with what Stannard calls "the negative assertion of order through an evocation of chaos." In short, he had not yet incorporated eschatology into his fictional universe.

Waugh's world view led him to an idiosyncratic political conservatism. Up to a point, political opinions should be of little concern to a reader; but the point at which we begin to inquire into the politics of an author is when we are forced to—which is to say when a writer allows the political or, more precisely, the ideological, to dominate the aesthetic. This insufferable corruption is widespread in our century, but it was particularly egregious in the 30's—"a low, dishonest decade," in W.H. Auden's justly famous phrase. During this period the totalitarian temptation proved far too seductive for many left-wing artists and intellectuals (Auden among them), leading them into the propagation of shameless cant and outright mendacity. This was not the case with Waugh: he viewed, says Stannard, "Art and politics . . . as mutually destructive." In fact, Waugh was quite aware of the artistic consequences of ideological engagement. His critique, for example, of the Marxist approach to art is remarkably cogent: "I do not think any artist, certainly not writer, can be a Marxist, for a writer's material must be the individual soul (which is the preconception of Christendom), while the Marxist can only think in classes and categories, and even in classes abhors variety." Indeed, one wonders what a Marxist would make, say, of Paul Pennyfeather! Waugh's creation of such characters—what Stannard refers to as his "temperamental sympathy for eccentrics, manipulators, men of the world"—was in keeping with his profound loathing of what he discerned as the trend toward bland conformism in modern life.

Appropriately, the volume closes with Waugh's life and work concluding one phase and evolving in a vastly different direction. He had finished the peripatetic wanderings that characterized his life in the 30's. His marriage to Laura Herbert (this was his second; his first, to Evelyn ["She-Evelyn"] Gardner, ended quickly in divorce, eventually annulled) supplied much-needed stability. What's more, he had exhausted the novelistic form that, up to this time, he had so deftly exploited. Clearly, *Scoop* (1938) marks the end of Waugh's early period. Stannard indicates that Waugh "was thirsting for a new fictional form which could include the dimension of 'supernatural reality,'" but the quenching of this thirst was not to come until *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). V.S. Pritchett, with his standard perspicacity, has said of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Waugh: "His early books spring from the liberating notion that human beings are mad; the war trilogy, a work of maturity, draws on the meatier notion that the horrible thing about human beings is that they are sane." An explication of this transformation—which must be viewed against Waugh's increasing withdrawal from the world and his deepening Catholic sensibility—is presumably the subject of Stannard's next volume, and, if this first one is any indication, it should prove a delight.

Speaking for God or Men? *by E. Calvin Beisner*

"Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays."

—Kierkegaard

Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity **by Allen D. Hertzke, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press; $29.50.**

For those unaware of the growing influence of religious lobbies in the nation's capital, *Representing God in Washington* should prove informative. It shows that religious lobbies of left and right are many and powerful, well-funded and well-staffed. They have learned the ropes of Washington power politics and are winning battles.

Hertzke believes that the overall impact of the religious lobbies is good, at least if we understand increased reflection of the views of ordinary people in public policy as "good." Carefully documenting his case, Hertzke argues that Americans' views on many public policy issues are tightly connected with their religious beliefs. Therefore, to the extent that religious lobbies reflect those beliefs, they reflect the desires and beliefs of a large majority of Americans. And many of the religious lobbies do represent their constituents' views fairly closely, with the notable exception of lobbies of mainline Protestant churches, which Hertzke demonstrates to be almost invariably far to the left of their constituents. (Even this, it turns out, is not cause for too much concern, for, "The established Protestant denominations do not now appear to warrant the unqualified appellation 'mainline'; indeed, the center of gravity has shifted," i.e., the mainline churches now represent only a minority of America's strongly religious people, so their divergence from their constituents' views doesn't count for much.)

Indeed, Hertzke's study supports the view that fundamentalists and evangelicals are right when they "argue persuasively that, contrary to the notion that they are attempting to 'impose' their values on the rest of society, secular values have been imposed, not only on them and their children but on most religious Americans . . . the impact of fundamentalist mobilization in raising concerns about cultural and moral change has been to enhance, not detract from, the genuine pluralism of American political representation."

Hertzke welcomes religious political activism as healthy for the body politic because it helps ensure that majority and minority viewpoints are heard and introduces religious ethical standards into analysis and formulation of public policy. Yet, like Tocqueville, he warns against too strictly partisan activity for religious groups lest " . . . they risk being discredited by historical events, and thus may jeopardize their part in the moral socialization of American citizens." But heeding that warning may be none too easy, for on the issues dearest to the hearts of most religious activists, "The Democratic Party, for the moment, seems institutionally wedded to a posture that symbolically and substantively appears to reject the cultural conservatism of many Catholics, evangelicals, and fundamentalists, as well as many members of the mainline Protestant denominations." In consequence, many religious activists are forced by default to support Republicans.

Hertzke is aware of the growing tension this causes in the Republican

E. Calvin Beisner is writing a book on Christian stewardship in light of the Christian world view, scheduled for publication in July 1988 by Crossway Books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Party. "The electoral efforts of fundamentalist leaders on behalf of conservative Republican candidates and their success in moving the white born-again constituency into the Republican fold have, paradoxically, created tension within the previously staid GOP . . . between the blue blood Republican establishment . . . and the conservative religious populists. . . . In the calculations of fundamentalist leaders the Republican party needs the evangelicals and fundamentalists, and not just their numbers but their fervor and superior grassroots organizations, in order to become the new majority party. . . . Said one leader, off the record: 'We told them to have candidates embrace the Christian agenda. But the NRCC instead told their candidates to stay away from the Christian Right. Stupid advice. The only chance the Republicans will have is if we take over the party.' Thus one of the most fascinating consequences of the electoral efforts of Christian fundamentalists, as we see here, is that the Republican party is now experiencing an internal contentiousness historically characteristic of the New Deal Democratic coalition." This is a phenomenon whose future will be fascinating to watch. If conservative Christian activists become disillusioned with the Republican Party and conclude that it is using them without paying them back by pushing their agenda, might the Democratic Party become the small third party, far to the left, with the Republican Party in the middle and some new Christian conservative party — in substance if not in name — to the right?

One welcome attribute of religious interest groups, according to Hertzke, is that they seem to defy the traditional view of interest groups as exclusively self-serving. For disciples of One who insisted that they follow Him in a life of sacrificial service to others, ultimate self-interest is defined as self-denial. This makes for exceptionally effective workers — one reason why the impact of some religious groups far outweighs their numbers. But self-denial might also explain a phenomenon that Hertzke does not address: the propensity of some religious activists to espouse socialist economic theories and policies, oblivious to their detrimental economic impact. Like their older secular liberal counterparts who have forgotten that it is charity to give one's own money but theft to give another's, they have confused voluntary self-denial with imposed deprivation.

Hertzke hints at, but does not explore, a curious inconsistency in the lobbying approaches of the mainline church leaders. They justify their divergence from constituents' views as "speaking prophetically." But whose "mouthpiece" (the root sense of "prophet") do they think they are? Not their lay members', and their rejection of the inspiration of Scripture rules out claims to being a "mouthpiece" of God. Indeed, they sound more fundamentalist, but without theological underpinnings, than fundamentalist lobbyists themselves, who, Hertzke points out, have learned to speak in terms of classical human rights rather than divine decrees. No wonder one anonymous legislative director said that mainline lobbyists are " . . . shadows of a religious past, echoes without authority. Secular liberals would agree with everything they stand for, but the nagging question: why are they religious at all? Why bother? Does this policy flow out of a profound, transcendental sense — or as a hasty addition to liberal politics[?]"

Though Hertzke does not reveal clear preference, evangelicals, fundamentalists, and conservatives will find more to celebrate in *Representing God in Washington* than their counterparts. "The consensus [among experienced Washington lobbyists] seems to be that, while fundamentalist groups have shaped the congressional agenda in certain respects . . . their real power is nascent." Mainliners' influence is waning. Repeatedly Hertzke shows that polling data indicate that the American public leans far more toward the positions of evangelicals and fundamentalists on social and economic issues than toward mainliners and liberals.

The Fourth Annual Erasmus Lecture

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN CRISIS

On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today

by

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. President of the International Theological Commission and Pontifical Biblical Commission.

To order your copy of BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN CRISIS send $2.50 (includes postage and handling) with the coupon below to: The Rockford Institute / 934 North Main Street / Rockford, Illinois 61103.

☐ Please send my copy of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's "BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN CRISIS."

☐ Enclosed is my check or money order for $2.50

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: The Rockford Institute / 934 N. Main St. / Rockford, IL 61103

TE890

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Piety, Then and Now *by K.L. Billingsley*

"All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book [the Bible]. But for it we could not know right from wrong."
—Abraham Lincoln

"The Cosby Show *is the greatest teacher of morals in American society."*
—Sheldon Hackney, president, University of Pennsylvania

Voices From the Heart: Four Centuries of American Piety **by Roger Lundin and Mark A. Noll, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; $19.95.**

Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism **by George Marsden, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; $19.95.**

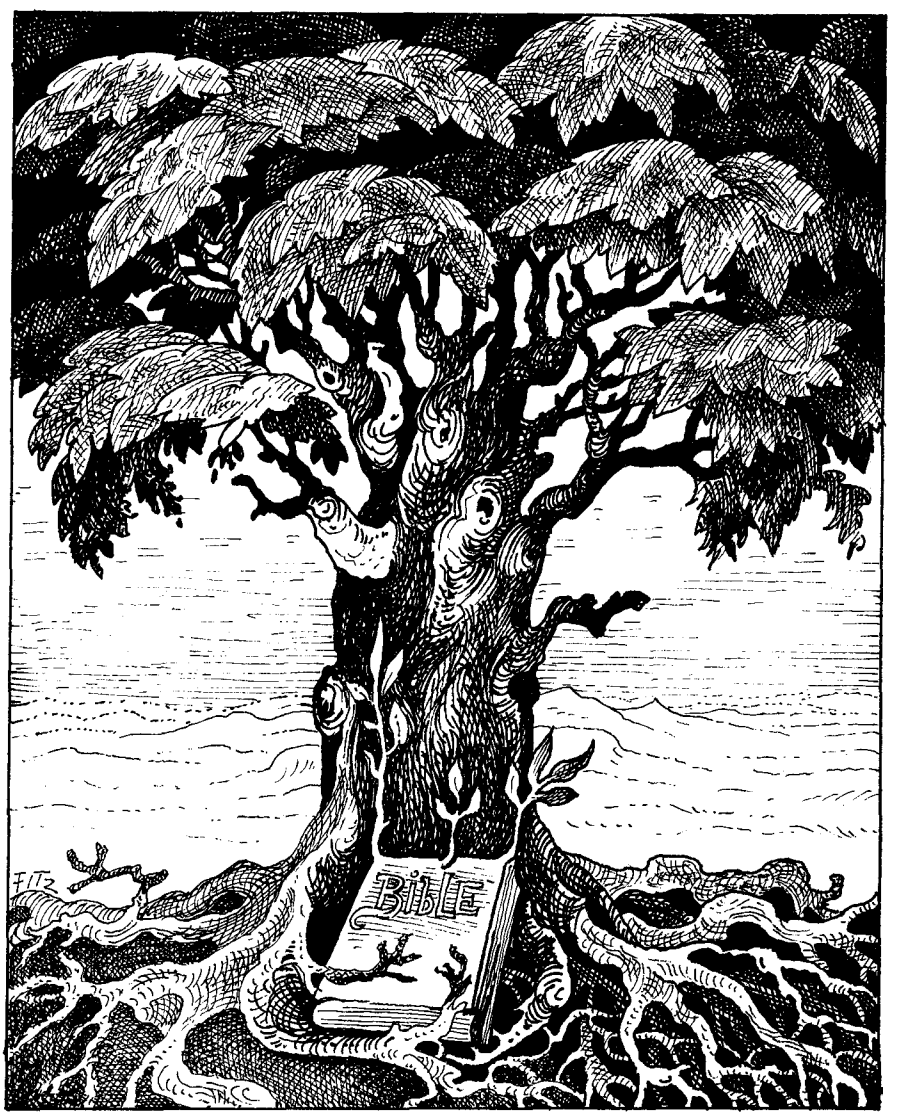
"America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of the Holy Scripture."

It is the kind of statement fully capable of causing Madeline O'Hair to check her pulse or Norman Lear to reach for his checkbook. Did it perhaps proceed from a pre-fall Jimmy Swaggart broadcast, or a North Carolina stump speech by Pat Robertson? Actually, it was Woodrow Wilson, on May 17, 1911.

One might quibble with Wilson's "Christian nation" formula, but Wheaton College professors Roger Lundin and Mark Noll have collected considerable evidence for a solidly *religious* nation, what the subtitle of their book calls "four centuries of American piety." The authors of *Voices From the Heart* are quick to add that the limitation of their work to "Christians who happened to live in North America" does not mean that Americans are more pious than other peoples, nor that America is "a new Promised Land." (Belgians and Swedes who are content at home may rest easy.)

Here is an eclectic bunch indeed: John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Jonathan Edwards, Jean de Brebeuf, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Walter Rauschenbusch, D.L. Moody, Thomas Merton, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day, John Updike, and Virginia Stem Owens among others. The anthology includes letters, journal entries, sermons, poems, fiction, and historical documents such as Lincoln's 1863 proclamation of a national fast. Some Jewish voices such as Will Herberg might have been included. They would certainly have been more representative of American piety than trendy Dutch priest Henri Nouwen. But the range is broad enough to provide a biopsy of the American soul. And as Tocqueville noted, America is a nation with the soul of a church.

Throughout the early selections, one is struck by the ease in which the subjects refer to the divine. This came as naturally as breathing not only to Puritan theologians and scribes such as Marie of the Incarnation but, as noted, to carpenters and farmers as well. There is sometimes a travail of soul, but also a clear sense of joy and certainly none of the modern squeamishness about death. "It is of



K.L. Billingsley writes often on religion and politics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

excellent use," says Roger Williams, "to walk often into Golgotha, and to view the rotten skulls of so many innumerable thousands of millions of men and women like ourselves, gone forever from this life." For many moderns, especially those in the "social sciences," this is morbidity or even a sign of mental illness.

But *Voices From the Heart* is not simply another collection of devotional writing, though many entries are most worthy of attention for that alone, as well as for their literary quality. Part of the authors' purpose is to show that piety was the flywheel of social reform in America. Lundin and Noll are keenly aware that the Word Police in the media and academy have equated piety with self-righteousness and hypocrisy. The authors are at pains to show that

REVISIONS

Churchbusters

Considering the nearly blind eye the West turns toward the plight of Christians in the Soviet Union, one has to wonder: Is it possible that we are the descendants of a civilization that used to call itself Christendom? The persecution of Soviet Jews is rightly considered a major issue, but to make an issue of the far more widespread attack on Christians seems to be taboo in polite company —sustained attention to the plight of millions of suffering Christians, our nominal brethren, is now taken as a sign of religious chauvinism.

In *The Bear's Hug: Christian Belief and the Soviet State, 1917-1986* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; $8.95; 223 pages), Gerald Buss, the Senior Chaplain at Hurstpierpont College (Sussex), seeks to arouse what remains of the conscience of the West. He does not write for specialists, who will be familiar with most of the information here, but for ordinary people — tourists confused by the sight of crowded Moscow churches or TV viewers of "bearded Russian Orthodox bishops arriving in the West on official delegations and being received at Lambeth Place by the Archbishop."

That confusion owes much to the subservient status of the Russian Orthodox Church, which operates under constant surveillance by a Council for Religious Affairs (CRA). Its control is extensive: "No bishop is consecrated or transferred without a painstaking check of the candidate by the CRA in close cooperation with the KGB." Seminary lectures consist of such topics as "the formation of the new man, one of the essential objectives of the building of communism," "the unity of the party and the people, key to all the victories of the building of communism," and "the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet Union, as the expression of the vital interests of the people." Some clergymen of varying degrees of independence slip through, but those who wish to rise in the Church know the proper objects of their worship. Patriarch Alexei had the right idea:

> Stalin is the first amongst the fighters for peace among all the nations of the world. He is our leader, whose charming personality disarms any who have met him by his kindness and attentiveness to everybody's needs . . . by the power and wisdom of his speech.

Troublesome priests (and laymen) feel the regime's wrath on every level. Members of any Christian church, even the emasculated Orthodox, are almost invariably barred from higher education and any sort of managerial position. Active believers have their homes broken into and searched, their jobs imperiled, their families threatened and assaulted. Always present, of course, is the prospect of some branch of Gulag; the prison, the labor camp, or the psychiatric "hospital."

Specific groups come in for particular persecution. Police often break up Baptist weddings, using a law against outdoor "ritual assemblies." Pentecostal schoolchildren are beaten by other students at the incitement of teachers; they are induced, by hostile questioning, to accuse their parents of forcing them into religious ceremonies, whereupon they may be placed in boarding schools, and their parents may face criminal charges. Baptists and Pentecostals are often imprisoned for "causing harm to health," said to result from speaking in tongues. This charge, as Buss notes, "can be applied to almost any religious group, since both circumcision and baptism by immersion have been legally construed as harmful to health."

The sort of people who concoct such rationales for limitless state intrusion are not the sort to mellow — a point often lost on the growing number of *glasnost* fans in this country. Buss does a special service in a chapter covering a CRA report to the Central committee, smuggled to the West in 1980. A typical paragraph in the report concerns an attempt by Orthodox priests to spark a revival in the Tomsk region:

> Each visit of a priest to a district where there had not been one for many years caused a sensation, rekindled the religious feelings of the faithful, aroused an unhealthy interest among unbelievers and those hitherto indifferent and, in short, answered to the interests of religious propaganda. We have taken steps to put an end to this sort of thing.

This, then, is the authentic Communist mind, in all its "dialectical balance" between the "strategy" of forced atheization, and the "tactics" of nominal concern for the will, and the feelings of the people. But "this sort of thing" will not be crushed; as one Pentecostal says, "For us, believers living according to conscience, the higher law is the law of God. We cannot become criminals before God." (MK)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"piety at its best is public as well as private. It embraces the lived world as well as the secret realm of the heart." More important, "it can inspire a broad range of service to God and humankind as well as encourage a deeper personal religion."

For the Puritans here included, the notion of "private faith" was a contradiction. Piety meant acting responsibly toward God and one's neighbor. While the Puritans often failed in that regard, such failure hardly makes them unique. And they certainly knew that they would answer to a higher power for their actions, a sense of responsibility scarcely evident in, say, Jim Wright.

The selections by G.W. Offley, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln show that the fight against slavery had a religious motivation. Likewise, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" reveals the extent to which King's Christian faith motored the civil rights cause. One could add the hospitals, schools, and orphanages founded by supposedly pie-in-the-sky religious types. Marxists are not known to build orphanages. And whoever wants the services of a Freudian must pay a steep price.

The authors comment that Melville "understood the predicament of humans who, try as they will, cannot escape God or the elemental forces of the world." This seems the very thing that modern secular ideologists have attempted to do. They view the past as a chronicle of superstition and oppression, lasting until the advent of such enlightened persons as themselves. Their mindset is for the most part what Talcott Parsons called "America's Fourth Faith"—the various denominations of materialist humanism. This effectively makes America's New Class a deracinated bunch, at odds with the traditions of their own society, with consequences in both politics and the arts.

As Woodrow Wilson's entry notes, "the Bible has stood at the back of progress" and was part of the nation's "hidden roots." In addition "every process of purification and rectification comes from the bottom, not the top." Without a transcendent reference point or code of morality, how is liberal democracy, which depends on virtue, to be reinvigorated? Popular culture now has a didactic or even priestly function, but it can hardly do the job. In research for his book, *The View From Sunset Boulevard*, Ben Stein did not come across a single instance in which a television character was motivated by religious belief. Even the transplanted Amish of *Aaron's Way* are, like the Huxtables, essentially nonreligious.

It also seems clear that a secular age will scorn private, religiously motivated philanthropy and call for an ever-encroaching state to perform its works of social righteousness. The state thus takes on a vicarious function, supplying an ersatz goodness. State compulsion replaces individual compassion.

As C.S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge, and others have noted, any art worthy of the designation "great" must point to the transcendent. It seems clear that a loss of the transcendent vision is largely responsible for the dearth of great art. Unless of course one thinks that *Sophie's Choice*, *Bright Lights*, *Big City*, or one of Steven Spielberg's cartoons will fit the bill.

Reinhold Niebuhr's entry includes a foreshadowing of the New Age movement, what a recent *New Republic* piece aptly called "Moronic Convergence," and which seems to be an increasingly popular alternative to both a barren secularism and the traditional religious outlook that moderns find unacceptable. Wrote Niebuhr: "Every kind of cult seems to flourish. Every sorry Oriental religious nostrum is borrowed in the vain effort to give meaning to pointless lives and to impart a thrill to vacuous existences." Whatever one thinks of those pious souls in this anthology, it cannot be denied that their lives did indeed have meaning and purpose. They were not "alienated."

Novelist Frederick Buechner, also included in *Voices*, is undoubtedly correct that for many the language of faith is dead. But one can certainly take issue with his designation of the "post-Christian world." In his *Modern Times*, Paul Johnson noted that "the outstanding non-event of modern times was the failure of religious belief to disappear."

It is easy to see why those waiting for this great event are intolerant. As Chesterton noted, men are most motivated by their religion, especially when it is irreligion, and Mort Sahl observes that the trouble with being an atheist is that you get no days off. In the Soviet Bloc, religion shows no sign of withering away, in spite of vicious persecution spanning seven decades. In the West, neither a stifling consumerism nor a highly secularized educational system have been up to the task. *Homo religiosus* shows great resilience.

People who are openly religious, and who believe that their faith has certain nonnegotiables, are the most gentle and law-abiding sector of the

We Love The Great Dead Poets

—we just don't publish them. America teems with **live** poets who inject venerable poetic conventions with singularly American vitality. The dead poets, many of whom are still on their feet, deserve a rest. Try us.

PLAINS POETRY JOURNAL
P.O. Box 2337, Bismarck, ND 58502
edited by JANE GREER

Quarterly. $14/year, $24/2 years. Send SASE for heartening editorial manifesto. **Order with this ad or facsimile and GET 5 ISSUES FOR THE PRICE OF 4.**

Name _____

Address _____

(Please enclose payment with order) Chron988

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

population. No matter, the Idea Elite has slapped a scarlet F on them: "fundamentalists." They are the last group which can be publicly defamed with impunity. If this be doubted, try taking one of the hysterical "religious right" scare stories such as *Holy Terror* or *God's Bullies* and substituting "Jew" for "Christian" or "fundamentalist." These attacks constitute the anti-Semitism of the New Class, which views religious people, especially outgoing Christians, as dangerous and even deviant.

For example, in a recent custody case in San Diego, the press reported the conflict between a "homosexual father" and a "fundamentalist mother" instead of between a homosexual father and a heterosexual mother. The religious beliefs of the father were not examined. Incredibly, the court subsequently spurned the mother and awarded custody of a 16-year-old boy to the homosexual lover of the father, who recently died of AIDS.

Another cliché denigration is "Ayatollahs." But if the legal prohibition of some forms of immorality links "Islamic fundamentalists" and Jimmy Swaggart, then Marxists are the greatest ayatollahs of all, for their regimes are bastions of militant puritanism. Fox Butterfield recalls that a Western visitor to China asked what the regime did about homosexuals and was bluntly told: "We shoot them." Behold, the real Moral Majority.

For those seeking an understanding of American fundamentalism, Duke University's George Marsden has provided *Reforming Fundamentalism*, which should be read along with his earlier *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. In the new volume, Marsden examines the wider movement through one influential institution, Fuller Seminary in Pasadena.

A common perception of fundamentalists — and even of their spiritual cousins, the evangelicals — is that they are intellectually deficient. Interestingly, many of the key leaders charted by Marsden were men of enormous erudition, knowledgeable in Semitic languages and Greek, with earned Ph.D.'s from Harvard, Yale, and Boston University. Among them: Gleason Archer, Harold Ockenga, and Carl Henry. The European imports such as Geoffrey Bromily and Bela Vassady also boast the highest scholarly credentials.

To be sure, such erudition, and the desire for it, has not always trickled down to the pews, and Marsden does a thorough job on some of the anti-intellectualism, the wild prophetic schemes, and the petty moralisms that are still characteristic of fundamentalism. Its darkest side is also here revealed, what its victims have rightly called "spiritual totalitarianism," or an "ecclesiastical police state"; the hair-splitting theological disputes and church-splitting fights, the blind anti-Catholicism, the secret meetings and denunciations. At its worst, fundamentalism might be described as an orthodox cult.

Standing alone, this all seems quite terrible, but in the words of a Les McCann song, one must ask, "compared to what?" Unfortunately, that is not part of Marsden's purposes, though he does show that formerly "main-line" groups such as the Presbyterians could be as petty and divisive as anyone. But those who in the 1920's decided that *everything* in Christianity was negotiable take a backseat to no one in obscurantism and outright buffoonery. They are much given to identifying the Kingdom of God with the Soviet Union, China, and various Third World gulags. Paul Hollander (*Political Pilgrims*) has done a good job documenting what Muggeridge calls a chronicle of "fatuous imbecility" unequaled in history. The fundamentalist won't drink because he believes it harms the body; the religious liberal won't eat California grapes because he believes this will promote social justice. The fundamentalist says "my country right or wrong." The religious liberal says "your country right or wrong." For every Bob Jones and John R. Rice there is a William Sloane Coffin and Robert McAfee Brown. Shallow calls to shallow.

Marsden comments that for many "a struggle with fundamentalism was a central event in their lives" and cites Garrison Keillor as such a person. Since Mr. Keillor has confessed to watching Jimmy Swaggart and sometimes sings hymns in public, there are probably better examples. It is entirely likely that behind many a glib skeptic or hostile television reporter is an aunt who sent tracts with birthday cards or lectured on the evils of rock and roll and premarital sex. The New Class is basically a reactionary class. If Jerry Falwell is for it, they are against it. But all is not bleak.

The movement Marsden charts is more properly called evangelicalism or neoevangelicalism. These people not only attempt the rather perilous task of living the Christian faith in a hostile and secular age, with the ACLU Religion Police on every hand, but are trying to find a middle ground between an unreflective fundamentalism and a moribund liberalism. They seem to be having some success, and this is surely a good development for the Christian church, for the country, and for what has been called the "conservative movement."

In a recent review of *Orthodoxy*, a collection of articles from *The American Spectator*, Roger Scruton of the *Salisbury Review* noted that although most of the material was intellectually first-rate, orthodoxy was precisely what seemed to be lacking. Scruton lamented that many of the writers seemed to share the basic materialist presuppositions of their liberal-left adversaries.

The evangelicals surely have much to learn about political activism, intellectual life, and debate from movement conservatives. But the broader movement needs a conduit to the deeper American roots and traditions if it is going to be more than a transitory phenomenon. And a glance at *Voices From the Heart* shows that Marsden's subjects, whatever their quirks, are rooted in a tradition reaching back not only to four centuries of American piety, but to times immemorial.

For Immediate Service

Chronicles

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1-800-435-0715

ILLINOIS RESIDENTS

1-800-892-0753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reading Swift Straight *by F.W. Brownlow*

"A joke is an epitaph on an emotion."
—Nietzsche

The Alluring Problem: An Essay in Irony **by D.J. Enright, New York: Oxford University Press.**

Telling truth in the form of a lie is one of the odder things human beings do. It is hard to imagine irony in Paradise, and there can certainly be none in Heaven, where we know even as we are known, and there is nothing to hide and nothing hideable. In Paradise after the Fall, on the other hand, God's first words—"Where art thou?"—would sound ironic to guilty Adam, who may not have known the word, but who had done the thing: the root meaning of irony is "dissimulation."

We begin to speak ironically very early in life, although most of us first become conscious of irony in adolescence, when we learn simultaneously that it is admired in writing and disapproved of by our parents and teachers. Later on, probably at the university, we learn that irony can be an attitude of mind, a kind of universal solvent capable, as Keats said in another connection, of making all disagreeables evaporate. Later still, when we know more and are certain of less, the ironic attitude will seem less a sanctuary and much more a funkhole.

To simplify a complex problem, irony draws bus power to amuse, infuriate, protect, and proclaim from the circumstance that things are seldom what they seem. There appear to be two chief kinds of irony: one that announces a fact, another that evades it. Whether you enjoy the irony will depend on your assessment of the fact unless—like the American electorate—you dislike irony on principle. Certainly, irony raises difficulties, and books about it ought to be interesting, if only for the examples.

On the whole they are not. Like other figures of speech, irony is more interesting to read than to read about. Besides, ironists have a reputation as clever, sophisticated, even profound people, and no writer on the subject wants to seem less clever than his subjects. This often leads to unnecessary convolution and indirection. The worst temptation is to treat irony ironically. Kierkegaard did this, and it is to D.J. Enright's credit that he says early on in this book that he found Kierkegaard's essay incomprehensible.

That kind of willingness to speak plainly is Enright's strength. Irony, though, is not a mode one associates with him. A writer who publishes the lines "And wash the coated tongue that it might speak" or "Who was it slid the noiseless *shoji*?" (from *Bread Rather Than Blossoms*) hasn't the self-protectiveness of the ironist, or his capacity for seeing that everything, including a reader's response, has at least two sides. Perhaps irony allures Enright because in some ways it evades him. Many of his ironies depend on attitudes not everyone will share, and many of the grand examples that our whole culture has recognized are missing.

His book is not, as the title says, an essay so much as 28 little essays, a personal album of ironies with comment and explanation. The intention is to be lively, unacademic, apothegmatic, to appeal to a taste for one thing itself and intelligent talk about it.

Up to a point, Enright succeeds. The comment is succinct, often interesting and fair. The author knows how to present himself as a character in his own right, and the personal vignettes—Enright in Singapore, Enright dodging a large policeman—are enjoyable. Why, then, does the book seem bland and accommodating, so unprovoked by a provoking subject? The answer is in the conclusion: "Irony lives in the ample territory between [paradise and hell]; it acknowledges what must be, contends against what should not and need not be, and intimates what conceivably could be." In other words, irony is a social democrat. She has a clear conscience and does good, socially responsible things: she acknowledges, contends, and intimates. Who could object to that? She also knows what's what, and has the good taste not to define it.

So despite the book's form, Enright's irony is academic, center-left, timid, and conventional. The examples often reflect the academic curriculum

F.W. Brownlow is professor of English at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the 50's and 60's—Donne, Marvell, Austen, Fielding—all well worked over, the comment well within the expected, aimed straight at an academic audience. Only a very thin-skinned academic will object to the carefully oblique censure of the revolting Brecht. Like Enright, most academics will share Wayne Booth's surprise that a student's paper on deer-hunting could be sincere, and sympathize with Dan Jacobson's shock on realizing that a line-'em-up-and-shoot-'em Englishman's talk was not a put-on. Yet, can such surprises be genuine? Whatever one thinks of bloodsporters and gunboat diplomats, surely it is odd that the ironic attitude of raised eyebrow and gathered skirt (imputed irony, one might call it), once the protection of gentility against foul-smelling mobs, should survive in academic common rooms.

Hence a well-intentioned essay proves to be a *Hamlet* without the prince. Irony is not academic at all. In Anglo-American tradition, whose literature is overwhelmingly Christian, the facts underlying the greater ironies derive from revelation—from such things as the news that wisdom is folly, that the first shall be last, and that he who gains the world will lose his soul. In that tradition there is nothing frivolous or evasive in saying that things are not what they seem. This gives the ironies of the masters their power, whether comic or tragic: Chaucer, More, Erasmus, Shakespeare, and Swift among the classics, Chesterton, Waugh, Powell, Spark, and Amis among the moderns. None of them, except Shakespeare and Swift, figures in this book.

"There is apparently less irony to be extracted from Shakespeare," says Enright, "than one might expect of our national poet." If you think of Shakespeare as a national poet, and look for verbal ironies, that may be true. Approach him as a Christian poet, and the case is much altered. As Kenneth Muir said years ago, the center of *King Lear*, the storm-scene of Act 3, turns on a verse from the *Magnificat: He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted the humble and meek.* Enright's comment on *Lear* is trivial compared to this. His treatment of Swift, though, focuses the point.

For a long time, Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (which, as *Chronicles* readers will remember, was that the state of Ireland was so bad, its only recourse was to sell the children for food) has been used as a crash-course in irony for unsuspecting freshmen and, more recently, high-school students: an inept solution, whether you consider the future of literature or of the students. Some students always take Swift straight, and suffer bewilderment, while some of their teachers make merry over the fact, and others express concern. Yet, it might be that these students are victims of an unpleasant practical joke, of a kind that would certainly disgust Jonathan Swift. Well: it seems that a school board somewhere in New York state banned the pamphlet on grounds of bad taste, something that Enright finds "beyond the bounds of credibility." And up go those eyebrows again.

Swift would agree that *A Modest Proposal* is in bad taste, but then so was the state of Ireland. As an orthodox Church of Ireland priest, Swift must have assumed that his readers would recognize the scriptural ground bass of his irony. Any mention of murdering children should make a Christian think first of the Slaughter of the Innocents, always explained to him as absolute evil, and aimed at the life of his own Savior, who came as a little child; then of the Savior's words:

> Whoso shall offend one of these
> little ones which
> believe in me, it were better for
> him that a millstone
> were hanged about his neck,
> and that he were drowned
> in the depths of the sea.

No Christian reader can mistake Swift's purpose. Non-Christian readers in secular schools, on the other hand, might miss the point entirely, might even think there's something to be said for the idea; the best they'll be able to do is discuss something called "the irony" in a mirthless, self-satisfied way. Anyone might call that bad taste. Worse still from the standpoint of a school board, readers with Christian inklings might connect Swift's variation on the Slaughter of the Innocents with their own America as well as with 18th-century Ireland. In schools where abortion is not unheard-of, Swift's bitter indignation might sear some consciences. And that would be in even worse taste.

Neither I nor D.J. Enright knows what lay behind the school board's decision to keep Swift out of their classrooms. It would be equally interesting to know why Enright would include him. No sensible person wants to see Swift banned; no sensible person wants to see him intruded upon youngsters not ready for him, either, or made the subject of academic trivialities. And how curious that Enright should be so scornful of these New Yorkers when he has left so many of the greatest ironists out of his own collection! This is a more serious lacuna in a book on irony than the omission of Swift—for whatever reason—from an 18-year-old's reading list. Where is Chaucer's trendy monk who wanted to know how the world should be served, Erasmus' Folly who said that Christianity could be very hard on the clergy? One suspects that they and their modern descendants, also missing, belong to another world and another book.

Against a Clockwork God

by Douglas Groothuis

***The Pagan Temptation* by Thomas Molnar, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

Western civilization dare not rest on its laurels, warns Professor Molnar, because its laurels are laced with philosophical and religious errors that threaten to topple it. The "pagan tempation"—the ancient pantheism, monism, and mysticism largely displaced by the Christianization of the West—now threatens to "repaganize" the Western world. And, ironically, if Christianity cannot alter its own "desacralizing" dynamics it will unintentionally assist this repaganization by default.

Molnar's thesis is that "the pagan world view persists behind the Christian world view and that favorable circumstances . . . allow it to manifest itself with renewed vigor." Although he doesn't cite him, Molnar agrees with C.S. Lewis that "pantheism is . . . the permanent natural bent of the human mind. . . . It is the attitude into which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the human mind automatically falls when left to itself."

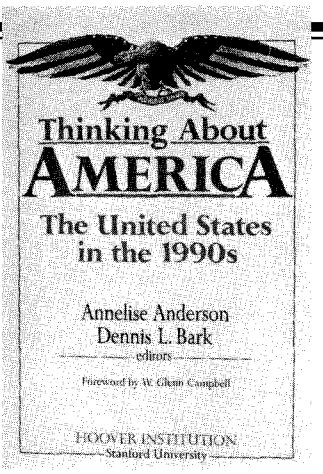
Throughout the book, Molnar spotlights the metaphysical chasm between paganism and Christianity, leaving no room for syncretistic fancies about "perennial philosophies" (Aldous Huxley) or "primordial traditions" (Huston Smith) that somehow unite all religious expression. Molnar demonstrates just the opposite and often adds apologetic punch to the exposition: "Human beings are not part of the substance of God, nor do they contain divine 'sparks' in their souls. Only by distinguishing between humanity and divinity can we give full credit and respect to reason and its exploration of God and nature; to history, which is human action always lovingly watched by God; and to faith, which is not a reabsorption into the divine but a state of trust in the good will of the Father."

The "pagan revival" commenced when Christian thinkers provided favorable circumstances for paganism by advocating an arid rationalism devoid of what Molnar calls "mythical imagination." Molnar's exposition of this development in the Middle Ages is an insightful reflection on the challenge of faithfully and reasonably integrating faith and reason. Although he rejects the pagan world view, Molnar understands it as catering to the human need for imaginative symbols, rites, and ceremonies—that mysterious sense of the sacred not exhausted by ratiocination. Inasmuch as Christian thinkers (consciously or unconsciously) sheered Christianity from the sacred, they fostered a hunger for meaning easily tempted by the exotic allure of paganism.

For Molnar, the antidote to the "pagan temptation" is the resacralization of Christianity through "mediating zones through which religious people reach for the transcendent." Here Molnar's sacramentalism comes to the fore, and he expends no little effort developing a sacramental theology. By "mediating zones" Molnar has in mind the liturgy, rites, symbols, and mysteries of the Roman magisterium which, he believes, help illuminate the transcendent in ways not available through reason or written revelation alone. He slights Protestantism for supposedly abolishing these sacramental zones in its zeal to crush all idols of mere human imagination. Protestantism, he thinks, tends to reduce God to a cold and distant abstraction and to divorce His creation from the divine.

Molnar believes that Christian spiritual life suffered when the Reformers understood the sacraments as "external signs of grace received by faith" instead of symbols which involve the congregation in reliving the Christian mythos. "This is the difference: the sign is a *remembrance* in the presence of the past event. The symbol incorporates that but goes beyond it: it is the *renewal* of a past event in the present in which past and present are unified and made continuous."

It is just here that Protestants appreciative of Molnar's historical and cultural analysis must part company with him. Although he never uses the term, Molnar assumes a transubstantial view of the Lord's Supper wherein Christ is thought to be repeatedly slain and offered for the sins of the world. With the Reformers, modern Protestants see this to be in disagreement with the finality of Christ's sacrificial



"...an important contribution..."
—William E. Simon

"...the book that will make you think..."
—Paul A. Volcker

"...truly important..."
—Zbigniew Brzezinski

"...indispensable..."
—Senator Robert Dole

"...thoughtful and insightful..."
—Senator Mark Hatfield

"...an unmatched contribution..."
—Governor George Deukmejian

"In this book are ideas that will change the world in the 1990s."
—Michael Novak

Almost a decade ago, the Hoover Institution Press published a book, ***The United States in the 1980s,*** which Mikhail Gorbachev described as the blueprint for the policies of the Reagan administration. A phenomenally successful public policy book, it sold 25,000 copies in four editions. Now the same publisher offers a book for the 1990s—47 original bipartisan essays by America's leading statesmen, scholars, and writers, including the four living U.S. Presidents and four Nobel Laureates.

Cloth, 0–8179–8751–7 $24.95
Paper, 0–8179–8752–5 $14.95

Hoover Institution Press
Distributed to the trade by National Book Network
4720 Boston Way • Lanham, Maryland 20706 • (301) 459-8696

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

death they find in Scripture. For them, the sacraments, as important as they are, do not have salvific value, but rather function as a means of sanctifying grace for those—and only for those—who respond in Christian faith. Molnar finds this view "impersonal, reified, and alienating" for the church. He thinks that rejecting transubstantiation consigns worshipers to the mere phenomena of the signs which are interpreted subjectively and so divorced from the actual objective reality (or being) of the sacrificial event itself. But the Protestant could reply that the sign helps worshipers subjectively commemorate a unique, objective, and unrepeatable historical event of supreme importance. Worshipers are instructed to respond properly in light of the reality being commemorated. Just how this is "impersonal, reified, and alienating" seems unclear.

Molnar's critic could further respond that his own view comes close to viewing the Lord's Supper as a magical rite in which an elixir is dispensed which is automatically efficacious to all involved, irrespective of the subjective state of the recipient. It could also be added that Molnar's notion of *reliving* the sacred event, rather than *commemorating* it, borders on the cyclical view of history embraced by the very paganism he rejects. (Molnar himself quotes Augustine's refutation of the cyclical view: "God forbid that we should swallow such nonsense. Christ died, once for all, for our sins.")

Questions should also be raised regarding Molnar's understanding of "myth." He does affirm that the "mythic" need not be factually false. He rightly sees the Christian drama of redemption as "mythic" since it answers a deep primordial need and addresses and answers—through revelation—the universal concern of creation, fall, and redemption. To borrow a phrase from C.S. Lewis, the Christian story is "myth become fact," or, as G.K. Chesterton put it, Christianity is "an answer to a riddle."

Yet Molnar believes that the Bible contains some factually false mythical material: "All things considered, the great difference between pagan myths and the Gospels is that most of the latter's stories are historically factual, and mythical elements touch only the inessentials." This reminds me of what Peter Berger calls "cognitive bartering" in which orthodoxy barters with modernity for the supernatural elements it may retain: "We'll give up the virgin birth, if we can keep the resurrection." Although this is not Molnar's aim, to admit any mythical accretions is to begin to undermine all historical authenticity. We cannot edit holy writ according to the whims of modern speculation and hope to escape unscathed (a point Molnar himself makes in reference to the truncated theology of Hans Kung). Moreover, there was insufficient time between the historical events and their commemoration in the Gospels for mythical accretions to develop.

Very importantly, *The Pagan Temptation* is a valuable resource for putting various forms of neopaganism and new occultism (which often go under the name of the New Age movement) into better perspective. Neopaganism is not a trifling fad but a perennial temptation with cultural force to transform the West. What is at stake is nothing less than Western civilization as we know it. Although some will find aspects of his sacramentalism unconvincing, Molnar calls us to discern just how modern Christianity itself may be contributing to the pagan allure by neglecting a proper understanding of the imaginative or mythic aspects of orthodoxy.

If it is true, as Molnar believes, that "in the minds of vast segments of the West, the Christian God has died . . . his death is simultaneous with the assumed ascent of humanity to divine status," we then face a challenge of the highest order.

Douglas Groothuis is a research associate with Probe Center Northwest and author of Unmasking the New Age *and* Confronting the New Age *(InterVarsity).*

Galileo Brought to Book, Again

by Bryce J. Christensen

***Galileo: Heretic* by Pietro Redondi, Princeton: Princeton University Press; $29.95.**

Galileo Galilei lives in the imagination of every high-school atheist as the archetypal champion of Truth, standing heroically against the malice and superstition of the ecclesiastical authorities who condemned him. This version of the events works wonderfully as melodrama but fails miserably as history—the Italian scholar Pietro Redondi has uncovered documentary evidence that Galileo's astronomy was not the principal reason that Church authorities brought him to trial. Rather, the real but hidden issue lay in the impossibility of reconciling Galileo's materialist philosophy with the Catholic theology of the Eucharist.

Why then was Galileo tried for his views on the earth's movement? In a painstaking work of historical sleuthing, Redondi traces the tangled motives of the principals involved: Pope Urban VIII, an early defender of Galileo who later came under attack from Spanish clerics for alleged laxity in fighting heresy; Father Grassi, the shrewd scientist, architect, and Jesuit who detected more than a whiff of heterodoxy in Galileo's writings; Cardinal Bellarmino, the "hammer of heretics" who officially informed Galileo of the Church's opposition to Copernicanism in 1616; Father Guiducci, Galileo's student and admirer whose efforts to help his mentor backfired; Cardinal Barberini, nephew of the Pope, who personally stage-managed Galileo's trial; and Galileo himself, who fanned the winds of controversy with his intemperate polemics. Top Church authorities genuinely wished to avoid the public scandal of bringing Galileo to trial for advocating doctrines contrary to belief in transubstantiation. (In 1624, just nine years before Galileo's trial, the Inquisition had ordered the body of Mario Antonio De Dominis exhumed and burned because of his advocacy of atomist principles very much like Galileo's.) Yet to still the damaging allegations and rumors, Church leaders felt it necessary to publicly discipline Galileo on the less serious—and therefore less scandalous—charge of Copernicanism.

The proud defiance of Galileo's apocryphal "Eppur si muove!" ("It still moves!") has sounded through the centuries. But the defiance loses its authenticity when we learn that Galileo's trial was the result of ecclesiastical plea bargaining designed to protect the Vatican as well as the defendant. As Redondi explains: "Since Galileo had been pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claimed by the pope . . . to be his devout son, the son's all-too-serious sin, even suspicion of it, would fall too heavily on the father's shoulders."

The immediate objectives may have been achieved, but the Church's strategy has proved disastrous in the long run, diverting attention from the real issues and exposing the Church to centuries of ridicule. While many Christians justly denounce the methods used by the Inquisition, it remains true that Galileo's philosophy (apart from his science) did subvert religious faith. For the orthodox, Galileo's debt to Copernicus is far less troubling than his borrowings from the pagan philosophies of Lucretius, Democritus, and Epicurus. Redondi concludes that Galileo's was "the anxious faith of the heretic, a faith that is always searching and never satisfied."

For Copernicus, the heliocentric system served as a mystical symbol, with the sun representing the glory of God the Father. But Galileo used "Ockham's razor" of explanatory simplicity to pare away from Copernicanism all of its author's spiritual passions, leaving behind only the formulae needed to make predictions about matter in motion. Redondi indeed identifies Galileo as a probable influence upon René Descartes, who regarded the world as a matter-motion machine wholly explicable without reference to spirits, angels, or miracles. Like Descartes, Galileo helped to turn Western civilization away from the awe-inspiring God of Scripture, toward the rationalized Clockmaker God of Deism.

As a set of equations, Galileo's scientific world view provides a set of tools for the mind to use. But as a philosophic cosmology, it fails to provide a transcendent metaphor that can shape the mind through contemplation. Galilean man exerts ever-more technical power while dwindling into spiritual sterility.

Three centuries after Galileo, it is past time to give Ptolemy his due. By any scientific standard, Ptolemy's geocentric system is useless. But that uselessness need not repel us if we remember with Leszek Kolakowski that "science . . . does not deal with reality at all, its meaning being utilitarian." Let those who wish to make predictions about the motions of planets or stars cull their equations from Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, or Einstein. While scientists fret about "saving the appearances," the reality beneath all seeming breaks through in prayer—and poetry. To appreciate the abiding truth captured in the Ptolemaic world view, read again Dante's *Commedia* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, both depicting a Ptolemaic universe. As a Catholic who lived 300 years before Galileo, Dante had little choice in the matter. But in Milton we confront a militant Protestant who had himself visited Galileo in Fiesole and had probably accepted the scientific validity of Copernicanism. Yet the poet speaks truer than the scientist when he nonetheless uses a Ptolemaic setting for *this* planet's drama of human sin and divine redemption. Besides, all poetry shares with Ptolemaic astronomy the attribute of sublime uselessness (W.H. Auden: "Poetry makes nothing happen").

An increasing number of scientists now in fact share the view of British physicist Steven Hawking, who believes that an "anthropic principle" governed the mysterious "Big Bang" in which the universe began. Man does somehow define the "target" at which the universe was "aimed." For locating the nub of the universe, Ptolemy proves a better guide than Galileo.

Bryce Christensen is editor of The Family in America.

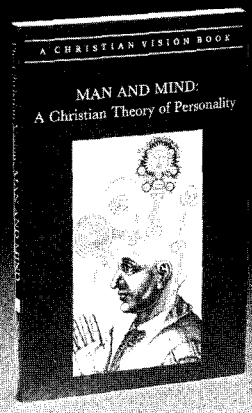
Pilgrim's Progress

by Don Feder

***Lovesong: Becoming a Jew* by Julius Lester, New York: Henry Holt; $17.95.**

Like many black intellectuals of his generation, Julius Lester went searching for his roots. Unlike the vast majority, he found them in a most extraordinary place.

MAN AND MIND:
A CHRISTIAN THEORY OF PERSONALITY



Why are so many psychologists hostile to religious explanations of human behavior? In what has been hailed as a path-breaking study, nine psychologists, theologians and philosophers offer the reason: Thomas J. Burke, Stephen R. Briggs, Mary Vander Goot, Paul C. Vitz, Charles Ransford, Merold Westphal, William Kirk Kilpatrick, John S. Reist, Jr., and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen.

"[illegible] one of the most important intellectual issues in the field of psychology today."
—Richard John Neuhaus
author, *The Naked Public Square*

$5.00 PAPERBOUND (Michigan residents add 4% sales tax)
VISA AND MASTERCARD ORDERS 800-253-3200, EXT. 801

HILLSDALE COLLEGE PRESS
Hillsdale, Michigan 49242

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A professor in the department of Afro-American studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Lester converted to Judaism in 1983. A metaphysical prodigal son, Lester would say he simply came home—after a hazardous journey, at that.

The intellectual odyssey of this minister's son started in the 1940's South, when as a child he discovered that one of his great-grandfathers, named Altschul, was a German Jewish immigrant who married an ex-slave.

As a boy, Lester recalls playing the melody to the Kol Nidre on a piano, ignorant of its significance but drawn to its haunting refrain. For his 12th Christmas, his mother presented him with a volume of Shakespeare's plays. Reading "The Merchant of Venice," he identified with Shylock.

"Yet in Shylock, I see myself as I do not in Du Bois, Johnson, Langston Hughes, Robeson or any other black figure. Is it because they are models of success and I need a model of suffering, someone to reflect a child's pain and confusion at being condemned because of the race into which I was born, someone whose anger at outrageous injustice gives me permission to be angry and through that anger to defend my soul? Or is it simply that through Shylock I learn that blacks are not the only people in the world who must ponder in their flesh the meaning of meaningless suffering?"

That a 12-year-old was preoccupied with such thoughts is understandable, given the times and circumstances. There was pain in Lester's boyhood, the mortification of seeing his proud father humiliated by service station attendants ("Fill 'er up, boy?"), averting his gaze as he passed white women, lest they think he was leering and invoke the horrors of the lynch mob. Indignation led to involvement in the Civil Rights struggle (when he was a student at Fisk University in Nashville) and eventually the black power movement, via the ironically misnamed Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

Julius Lester, author of "Look Out, Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama!"—the ultimate black macho flash which became the movement's manifesto.

Julius Lester who hosted a black-consciousness talk show on WBAI-FM in New York, in the late 60's.

Julius Lester who, during the city's 1968 teachers' strike, permitted a guest to read on the air an anti-Semitic poem by a black schoolchild, which earned him the distinction of being the Jewish Defense League's first target.

Julius Lester the radical, who wanted to save the world through political action, but—like countless pilgrims who preceded him—soon perceived that ideology is graven image, unable to comfort or heal.

Paralleling his political development is a spiritual quest. Having rediscovered God, after the typical collegiate fling with atheism, Lester wonders how he can "live in holiness." His search leads him to a Cistercian monastery which once sheltered Thomas Merton, the Taos Pueblo, the site of a Shaker community at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, and other religious landmarks across the country.

None of it seems quite right. Perhaps it's an ancestral call, but gradually, over the years, he grows closer to Judaism: studying it, defending Jews against attacks by black militants (he's the author of a 1979 *Village Voice* piece on Andrew Young's dismissal as UN ambassador, rebuking black leaders for their condemnation of Jews over the affair), feeling its emotional tug.

Still there's a reluctance to go all the way, theologically. "For the rest of my life, do I want to hear people say, 'Gee, you don't look Jewish,' thinking they are being clever and witty? Do I want to be an object of curiosity, a side show freak: Julius Lester, former black militant, former anti-Semite, becomes a Jew? I would be less odd if I grew another head."

Such understandable apprehensions are overcome by a need frankly, yet eloquently, stated: "Why do I want to be a Jew? The answer is simple: I am tired of feeling guilty for not being in synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I am tired of feeling lost on the first night of Passover. I am tired of feeling jealous when I see Jews going to or coming from synagogue."

Lester is drawn to the faith of Israel by what he terms its "curious mixture of the rational and the mystical." He exalts in Judaism's ability to sanctify the mundane, to imbue everyday activities with holiness, by blessings and commandments which raise eating, observing the wonders of nature, even performing bodily functions to a spiritual plane.

He rejoices in the Shabbat in which participants—by abstaining from work, through prayers and memorials—recall that man is a transient on this earth, that life and everything in it belong to the Creator. This is the spiritual focus he has hungered for so long, his own method of "living in holiness."

With a greater understanding of the creed than most born to it, Lester affirms: "I choose and I am chosen. I choose to accept responsibility for the Sabbath. I choose to accept responsibility for bringing God into the world once a week.

"The unseen soul is as real as what is seen. That experience enters history with the Jews. To guard and embody that experience with attentiveness to the nuances and intricacies of holiness is the Jew's task. It is that for which God chose Jews."

The Talmud teaches that along with the Hebrews of the Exodus the souls of every Jew to come (the convert as well as those to be born to Israel) stood at Sinai to accept the law. A decade before his conversion, a monk at a Trappist monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts, told Lester: "When you know the name by which God knows you, you will know who you are." That name, Lester learned, is Yaakov Daniel ben Avraham v'Sarah, as he is called to the Torah at Saturday morning services, and as he is known in Israel.

Don Feder is a writer for the Boston Herald *and a syndicated columnist.*

Aristotle Shrugged

by Charles R. La Dow

***Educating for Virtue*, edited by Joseph Baldacchino, Washington, DC: National Humanities Institute.**

"There are two kinds of mind in the world: the Platonic and the Aristotelian," goes an academic aphorism. To whatever degree this mental division may have been real, the Aristotelians seem to be practically extinct—the essayists in *Educating for Virtue* must, essentially, be Platonists. The key to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that would be this insight from the foreword: "If there is a single thread that runs through these essays, it is the recognition of a universal order that transcends the flux of human life and gives meaning to it."

This book aside, it is difficult to recall any current criticism which offers a clear-cut alternative, either to idealism or materialism or logical positivism. The options appear to be between otherworldliness and attempts to rationalize reality. Failure to invite Aristotle into this discussion does seem a little willful, perhaps even unprofessional. After all, versions of his organon and other works were basic to education for centuries and still linger in the forms of language. Just because Plato was more palatable to the Arab scholars who were mentors of the early Christians, he was no less a pagan than Aristotle.

Exactly how radical his empiricism was, Aristotle spelled out in *Categories*. Departing from the idea of universal order (being, or substance), he declared that primary substance is the individual person, place, or thing; for, as he said, without the individuals, species and genus would not exist. Once one has descried this distinction, it is discoverable throughout his works, despite ensuing apocryphal entries such as speculation about a "Prime Mover," or First Cause.

Adhering to this ontological viewpoint, Aristotle's appeal was to the responsible free will of the individual rather than a call for obedience to ineffable ideals. His hierarchy of ethical responsibility began with the individual, thence to the family, only then to larger social and political entities.

The Stagirite was able to conceive of happiness in this world, in contrast with so much of the Oriental and other monistic thought. For him, happiness could come to the individual who follows the mean between extremes. For example, the virtue of generosity would lie between prodigality and miserliness. If this poses difficulties for quantification, it does avoid the absurdity of limitless goodness, or the damnation of absolute sinfulness. If we aim to educate for virtue, surely we should take care not to propose impossible goals—with perdition the sole alternative to attaining them.

Which is not to accuse any of these five essayists—Claes G. Ryn, Russell Kirk, Paul Gottfried, Peter J. Stanlis, or Solveig Eggerz—of any such educational crime. Their essays are full of wisdom, both their own and attributed. Most heartening is the title, in turning away from such near-oxymorons as Character Education and Ethical Values. Their dedication to the classical tradition at large and their eloquence in its support are unquestionable and most impressive. Nor, as noted before, is their neglect of Aristotle's originality in any way unusual. It is a pity that the author of so much of the Western tradition of liberty, as well as general science, is shelved in favor of Plato or Karl Marx. Recourse to his works in collation with these authors' dilemmas could clarify their epistemological and other observations.

Charles La Dow is a retired professor of history living in San Diego.

Great Topics, Great Issues!

Catch up on the CHRONICLES you've missed by ordering from the following collection of recent back issues.

Title	Qty.	Amt.
☐ **Victims of Government** August '88—Dan McMurry moves in with the homeless: "Hard Living on Easy Street"; Allan Carlson examines the mushy mentality of the welfare state in his "Charity Begins at Home"; Harold Brown on anti-white racism; and Michael Warder probes the depravity of privileged Westerners who work for the Soviets in "Why Spy?" **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Masculine Feminine Neuter** July '88—Retired Vice Admiral James Stockdale writes of personal experiences in Hanoi; feminists' hate of successful women is rivaled only by their love of power, writes Janet Barlow in "Still Crazy After All These Years"; Allan Carlson on AIDS and civil defense; plus: gay science, feminist bishops, women novelists. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Ethnic Conflict** May '88—Harold O.J. Brown tells why Swiss ethnic pluralism works; Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn stresses the historical reasons for South Africa's state of affairs; and Samuel Francis looks at Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Homage to T. S. Eliot** April '88—Octavio Paz, Josef Pieper, James Tuttleton, Thomas Molnar, Fred Chappell, and Thomas Fleming pay their respects to the great modern poet. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Who's in Charge?** March '88—Editor Thomas Fleming discusses the private diplomats' and public scoundrels' fight over the corpse of the American empire; Samuel Francis asks, "If Presidents have a free hand in foreign policy, who needs a Constitution?"; and Jack Douglas wonders if it may be time to elect federal judges. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Back to Nature** Feb. '88—The Greening of America, Part II, by Allan C. Carlson; Mutiny in Paradise or Sexual Freedom/Political Slavery by John Chodes; and Jigs Gardner examines repentant radicals—"conservative" and doing well. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Institutionalized Writing: Are Universities the Last Stop for New Leftists and Burnt-Out Writers?** Jan. '88—Bulgakov—a White Survivor of the Red Terror; plus handguns in Florida, the homeless in North Dakota, and Lloyd's of London's new Tinkertoy home. **$2.50**	____	____
☐ **Restoring the Constitution—Seizing Power From Judges, Congressmen, and Other Usurpers** Dec. '87—Clyde Wilson asks, "What have they done to our laws?"; Barry Shain on Conservative Commons and Kyle E. McSlarrow on judicial editing and congressional inaction, plus much more. **$2.50**	____	____
*Postage and handling included in issue price.	**Total amount due**	____

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Chronicles • 934 North Main Street • Rockford, IL • 61103 CBI588

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter From Albion

by Andrei Navrozov

April in Paris

The banging was first heard somewhere in the Alsace countryside, an hour or so after the train left Basel. For some reason, local worthies invariably pronounce the city's name the French way, making it sound like the pagan deity denounced by the Hebrew prophets. The temples of Baal, in this unconscious interpretation, are the ubiquitous banks, I suppose, but having spent a few days as a guest of one of the high priests here, I had better hold my tongue. *Ryltse v pushku*, as the Russians say, there is down on my own muzzle. It was delicious, whatever it was.

The city is silent, except for the nearly inaudible hum of money being made, so the sudden insolence of all that banging was all the more jarring. On inspection, its source turned out to be the restaurant car, where a grim Frenchman kept rattling bottles and trays. He did so out of a sense of duty, and the noise seemed to echo his innermost thoughts. This is my job—bang, bang, rattle, rattle—he was thinking, and personally—bang, rattle, bang—I'd much rather be drinking coffee, but some of us—bang, bang, bang—have to work for a living.

We thought of the garbage collectors in Rome. The noise they made had no subtext, they did not think dark thoughts as they banged away. They would be at it between 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning, beneath our windows in Via Monte della Forina, throwing bits of scrap metal, old pipes, and other handy construction debris into the air, then picking them up and throwing them again and again, until 8:00, when it was time to start moving the garbage bins around and repeat the whole performance using only the low bass notes of which the new instruments were so marvelously capable. The third and final transcription of the piece—to be raced through *molto vivace* in just under half an hour, by 9:00, when citizens of Rome would start opening their window shutters—consisted of shouts, laughter, and serial experiments with the truck engine (which invariably rose to the occasion and produced animal, sometimes even human sounds rarely associated with that coarse, prosaic invention popularized by Henry Ford). There was no guile in any of this, no intention whatever to cause offense or inconvenience, no attempt to attract attention. Nor was this work in any conventional sense of the word, work as routine, as activity essential to survival; it was only work as poets understand it, which is why these people took three hours to "do" what could have been "done" in five minutes. They could have been drinking coffee instead, but they chose to work. Work is joy, and joy is sometimes inefficient.

Thus, as the train sped on towards Paris, the contrast with the calculated, underhanded noise of the working Gaul was obvious to the ear. Here was the aural midpoint between Swiss Money and Italian Pleasure: French Resentment.

The last of the pre-election rallies were on the march then, the marchers getting ready to vote their spite. It was clear that the candidate best able to muster the nation's social envy in the most underhanded way would win. But we did not take the detour to watch the French vent their spite and make fresh mayonnaise. Paris is blessed with Russian restaurants—40 when last counted—and even a dinner at the modest Au Regal, in rue Nicolo, makes such a trip worthwhile. We ate our *pelmeni* seated across from Bakunin's great-grandson, who happily harvests the fruits of social order as a professional masseur. The family must have known it would come to a bad end when Misha was tossed from the First International in 1872 ("Don't say I didn't warn you," Karl must have told them).

Unlike the summer, April does not draw many Americans to the Continent. To make the condition permanent, we thought, someone should propose to Donald Trump the following ambitious undertaking. Why not build Europe in New York, or say New Jersey, complete with important monuments (Eiffel Tower, Houses of Parliament, Colosseum), cultural relics (Stonehenge, bits of the Vatican, some Paris cafés), and so on. Much of this has already been done piecemeal (Yale's Oxbridge colleges, for example, or the House of Pancakes). New York already boasts the world's largest Gothic cathedral, St. John the Divine. But the idea of a whole Disneyland of Europe—in Trump l'oeil, as it were—would have *tremendous* appeal!

As a project of Trumpeuropa (registered trademark), Europeland (registered trademark) would be very cheap to build: most buildings could be two-dimensional, in the manner of Potemkin villages and Hollywood stage sets, since their main purpose, in the first place, is to provide a backdrop for family photographs. One or two could be working replicas, and another would be a kind of temple of world culture, its contents decided upon by the editors of the *New York Times*.

It would be marvelous, for example, if the vestry doors of a famous church could actually lead to a replica of Freud's house in Vienna, while the British Museum Library, at last renamed the Karl Marx Library, could be filled with books written by the *Times* contributors over the years. Small historical inaccuracies would probably pass unnoticed (besides, since the *Times* would be given a piece of the cultural action, retired schoolteachers and other media gadflies would have nowhere to vent their complaints).

Thus Donald Trump himself (and his wife Ivana) would be able to carve out for himself (and his wife Ivana) a major niche in European history. Brezhnev, for example, was fairly modest (given the opportunities at his dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posal) when he made himself the most important military commander of World War II, and there is no reason why Trump could not do him one better, indispensable as his leadership was in the Franco-Prussian, the Russo-Japanese, and the Boer wars, not to mention the Korean action and the Vietnam conflict. A war museum, crammed with Trump memorabilia, could be erected on the site, with Paul Nitze as custodian, Henry Kissinger as archivist, and Larry Speakes as tour guide. . . .

. . . That banging again! I must have dozed off. This is what happens when a vodka drinker not content with *Ryabinovka* (rowanberry) goes on to *Admiralteiskaya* (Siberian cranberry). . . . What a nightmare.

Andrei Navrozov is poetry editor for Chronicles.

Letter From the Boardroom

by Thomas Mammoser

Excellence Revisited

A flyer plugging yet another "excellence book" hit my "in box" recently—another reminder of the infatuation of American business with the "pursuit of excellence." We passionately love success, just hate second place, and truly disdain failure.

The drive to excel provides rewards both psychic and material—no question. But I believe it also harbors a germinal ideal that—with fuller development—might help toughen our national ethos and flagging moral fiber.

ABC *Nightline* host Ted Koppel said it well in a commencement address at Duke University: "We have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions."

A higher personal and professional ethic would be well-served by a richer interior culture of what constitutes success. We're quick to put quantitative yardsticks to this powerful energizer of business. But let's tread carefully; "quantitative" success generally delivers ephemeral goods, leaving us still struggling mightily in search of fulfillment. Realistically, there's always more to be had. A friend of mine, privy to prevailing attitudes in the sports world, calls it the "what's next" syndrome. After the $800,000 salary, the Mercedes, the adulation of millions, "what's next"?

Money's perhaps the most obvious, and noxious, illusion. But even less mundane allurements—power, clout, honors, headlines, etc.—can forever be exceeded. As Andre Gide was wont to say, "The terrible thing is that we can never make ourselves drunk enough."

The "pursuit of excellence" books, the bookstore's newest bonanza, hardly have the full answer. Yet the apotheosizing of the search—it may well be called America's "natural religion"—at least gives its own measure of hope and light.

I believe it gives hope that American business people can respond to an ideal richer than mere self-expression, self-interest, and acquisitiveness. And perhaps it can help restore a deeply needed and potentially transcendent ideal for modern man—the sanctification of his work, the first and indispensable step in restoring his character.

Excellence is a clarion. It tweaks our nobility . . . it says, "be the best we can be." Virtue is its own reward, Aristotle taught—excellence in behavior brings happiness. Perhaps the noble Greek deserves a second chance; our beleaguered national ethos could certainly use him.

Victor Frankel claimed it's not so much what we do that's important to us, but what we do it for. Ecclesiastes tells us we are made to work, as the bird to fly. We crave useful activity. The psyche cannot avoid testing itself, seeking meaning and results. But more than ever, it seems, it cries out for a frame of reference, a grand ideal to guide and inspire our daily tasks.

The dream of excellence might just be that ideal, with a potential far beyond generating mere lucre or better work. Properly perceived, it can serve to enhance the very *worker himself*. Beyond challenging him to excellence as *worker*, it can challenge him also—and more importantly—as *person*. Which is to say it can properly guide and challenge his *moral* actions. The impact of his deeds upon others and—lest we miss the message of prevailing sexual aberrations—upon himself.

Social and personal forces can easily confuse us, and the pressures and allurements these days seem to extend *ad infinitum*, if not *ad nauseum*. Yet however benumbed the soul, our deepest aspirations reveal a compelling need not just for having or producing more but for being more. They expose our eternalness, our search for ideals, our need to reach beyond self to avoid suffocating in it. Hell is not "other people," as Sartre mistakenly claimed. Hell is self, with no exit. The real failure in today's frenetic pursuit of excellence would be failing to perceive its enormous potential to ennoble not just the work, but—in the fullest measure of his personality—the worker.

Thomas L. Mammoser is director of corporate communications for Walgreens.

Letter From Prague

by Thomas Molnar

Golden City Blighted

It's a tale of two cities. There is the Prague that travelers meet as they enter: an endless succession of socialist concrete apartment houses, socialist sportsfields, socialist parks with socialist cement statues. The hotel we inquired about was unknown to most socialist passersby, and when we finally reached it, we found a modern concrete block, geared to earning foreign currency (some through the services of socialist call girls). The socialist clerk behind the desk was morose and offered the minimum of German or English for information. (Quite different from the one or two people I had stopped on the street, who had a nostalgic spark in their eyes when I addressed them in French. Ah, the Paris connection!)

It was late afternoon, and all we could do was to stare from our 10th-story window in the direction of real Prague, the second of the two cities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it was so far that we saw nothing.

The next day we took the socialist subway, built on the Paris model but functioning somewhat unsocialistically — that is, very well. We got off at the fifth stop (the third was the Gottwaldowa cultural center, a cement wedding cake) and found ourselves in a Florence of the North! This Prague is a dormant princess — a German one, I may add. Its center, with centuries of art, is majestic and subtle, aristocratic and bourgeois, imperial and Catholic. The Hradcanny castle *quartier* assembles exquisite architectural marvels, and looking down from the bastion walls you may easily count 50 church steeples — Romanesque, gothic, and baroque — beautifully harmonized. Not only churches: palaces, squares, parks, narrow medieval streets, 19th-century opera, fine statues — all of it bequeathed by the nobility, the church, the empire, or the bourgeoisie. The mark of the Communist regime is only desolation; it built nothing, but only conspired to let the past peel off the walls.

As we turned a corner, we saw the Charles Bridge. It was a religious experience. Imagine a stone bridge, so simple that it fills your eyes and soul at once. None but an art- and learning-loving emperor of the "Dark Ages" (Charles IV) would dare build this bridge, then place on its dark sand-colored parapets the black metal statues of saints with gilded crowns, scepters, and crosses. Cars are not allowed; the bridge lives with ordinary humanity, connecting two old parts of Prague like a holy wedding band. At every corner, the streets and squares surprise you with styles, from the 14th to the 19th century. A walk through the old city is like promenading through time, at least as much as in Vienna (Prague too was the capital of an empire), almost as much as in Paris or Rome (both of which are, after all, much more ancient).

Now this was the good news. The bad news is that almost all structures, from the cathedral on Hradcanny to St. Jakob, are in bad repair, the walls peeling and leprous, the churches "closed for restoration," many buildings practically in a state of collapse. Is this the consequence of ill will, neglect, or lack of funds? Probably all three, but in some places restoration is proceeding, such as on the house where Kafka lived. At every turn Prague breathes an ancient cultural tradition: its church music, its private circles where members read great literature, its café terraces, museums, princely palaces, even the tiny workshops behind the castle where alchemists and goldsmiths used to work. (Emperor Rudolf II's court alchemist was none other than astronomer Kepler.)

Outside the city's beautiful core, there spreads to infinity the most desolate postwar "living area" I ever saw. The concrete blocks perfectly symbolize Marxist thought and its conception of man. In the city of two Karls — the emperor and Marx — what else can the inhabitants be but morose, unsmiling, often brutal in their contact with each other and with visitors? Restaurants and cafés serve inedible food, waiters are impatient and rude, the clients poorly dressed. It is an all-around proletarization.

Prague provides a great lesson in political philosophy, by its juxtaposition of culture and barbarism. The first is represented by the extraordinary richness of cityscape. Italian, German, Czech, and Flemish architects passed through here, working for bishops, and noble families endowed with tested and subtle taste. These past patrons knew what they wanted and discussed it with their artists. (Only the late-bourgeois of the 19th century and the yuppy generation of this one submit to the "interior decorator" and his showroom taste.) Prague — Catholic, Hapsburg-imperial — became a miracle of harmony by which the excellence of taste dared express itself in many styles. This town is the crowning beauty of Catholic Central Europe; it suffered from no bombs.

Now it suffers from barbarism. This jewel box is squeezed by endlessly stretching Stalinist blocs, the proof that regimes and their art are in subtle correspondence. Ideologues do not build but construct; they mechanize inner life because it is the source of imagination and incalculable desires. Nowhere did I understand Marxism as fully as at Sankt Jakob Platz. In their greed for the dollar and the deutsche mark, the gray and nameless authorities (one inevitably thinks of Kafka, whose windows happen to be nearby) must have decided on its restoration to attract tourists. But there seems to be a glee (*Schadenfreude*) on the notices posted: "temporarily closed to the public" — or no notices at all, disinforming you thereby that you stand on architecturally sacred ground and that you could be in a wonderland, had the authorities not decided otherwise. In short, I recommend Prague to lovers of beauty and to the students of art (although the two are not necessarily the same), as well as to those in need of a lesson in the finer type of destruction that Marxism inflicts on God's and man's handiwork.

Thomas Molnar is on the faculty of The City University of New York and author of The Pagan Temptation.

Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Lumpenpolitics: A Lament

Election Day nears, and two faceless candidates leer ahead of us like dope-starved punks who know there's nowhere else for us to go. They need a fix, and in the process we'll lose our money and our dignity. If that's all we lose, I guess we're lucky.

These strange men (and the occasional odd woman) who want to be President seem to operate outside any of Western civilization's ethical considerations. They violate every rule the rest of us learned in kindergarten, Sunday school, and at our mothers' knees. They tell lies. They make promises they know they can't keep. They covet what belongs to others. Each one would sacrifice his first-born child to live in a large white house in a city that most of us here in the Heartland consider the ends of the earth — somewhere to visit patriotically, dutifully, but no place to raise a family.

Mostly, though, it's not the unsavory character of all the candidates that bothers me so much as the feeling that they come from the planet Grzyk, a million light years from reality. I'm sure these guys would all make fine neighbors, but when a man gets it into his head that he wants to be President, not only all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

decency but logic is allowed to fall by the way. It's incredible but true that a candidate may say that he believes both in sanctions against South Africa and in free technological trade with the Soviet Union; that homosexuals are to be afforded special rights and the unborn no rights; that we can enable women to be liberated from caring for their children by funding counseling for juvenile delinquents; that the way to prevent teenage pregnancies is to give out condoms in high school bathrooms. These are *grown men*, folks, trying to convince us that they can engage in extramarital poll-taking with every model they meet and still be devoted to their wives and families; that if the Soviets know we can defend ourselves against their missiles they'll send them sooner; that even though heaping money on the poor has never helped them rise above poverty, this is the magic year when enough money will be heaped to finally make a difference; that buying the freedom of hostages will help prevent others from being taken hostage; that if our Central American friends can't be helped legally it's legal to do it illegally; and (each one) that he's not in this for the glory but the rest of them are.

Perhaps most disturbing of all—because it's a symbol of some larger truth and also seems to be an augury—is the rapid and dangerous intellectual decline of the President who has received more popular support, affection, and begrudging respect from his enemies than any other President in decades. Having after eight years brought to fruition exactly none of his right-minded and greatly touted ideas, this good Christian man and his wife phone home across 3,000 miles every day to learn the conjunction of the planets, by which they schedule their day, while (as Jack Anderson has pointed out) Moscow undoubtedly listens on a wiretap and plans its offense. It seems obvious to me that there have been numerous times in the last few years when the Reagans' astrologer has said, "This is an auspicious day to give away the farm." A lot of the farm is gone for good now, and a lot of the world is laughing harder at us than even eight years ago under a President whose name no one cares to remember, and still Dutch strides cheerfully to the helicopter, grinning and waving, deftly avoiding the tough questions. His nonchalance isn't Teflon, it's Kryptonite.

We have *let* all this happen. Candidates spit out non sequiturs *ad infinitum*, and it's considered impolite for those at the scene of the crime, even the nonbelievers, to question them. So, politely, we don't, we Americans with the reputation of crudeness. Many of the voters in this country take seriously as a candidate for President a man who has kissed Fidel Castro and called him "brother," a man who talks in rhymes, has denigrated nearly every ethnic group but his own, and has no experience in government. People of all racial persuasions love this man simply because he is black, or because he is (no pun intended) kinky. These people will go into our voting booths to vote for the man *their* man tells them to, without ever having demanded accountability from themselves or him. Others are rooting for the current Vice President because they love his boss and mentor, who convinced them that "It's Morning in America." Still others will probably get a chance to vote for a candidate who claims to be devoutly Greek Orthodox—who, more to the point, will likely be *supported* by the Greek Orthodox—but who, according to the *Catholic Eye*, married a Jew and never had his children baptized. We allow from these gentlemen improprieties of action and impossibilities of logic that several generations ago we wouldn't have tolerated in our children. Now that *tolerance* has become the catchword of the century, it's what we do best. We do it to death.

Or maybe it's just that we've truly come not to care, because we understand that *once they take office*, all the candidates are pretty much alike. We've enabled them to be alike. Power

REVISIONS

Religious Poetry

Most Americans grow up hating poetry, and if there is one type of poetry we hate above all others, it is religious poetry. Somewhere we must have run across Sister Perpetua's sonnet sequence on chastity or have been forced to endure late Victorian hymnody. Most of us prefer poetry about love or death or farming, perhaps because it is harder to write about things of the spirit than things of the flesh.

In this respect the ancient pagans had it easy. Theirs was a religion of flesh—myth and ritual—more than of spirit. Greek religious verse encompasses the great Homeric hymns, lyric odes, even tragedy. Christian poetry is more limited in its themes. Milton aside, Bible stories don't usually make good verse. Still, there is a distinguished body of religious verse in English: Herbert and Donne, Wordsworth's ecclesiastical sonnets, Francis Thompson and Gerard Manley Hopkins. In our time, some of the best poetry is, in fact, on religious themes—as Paul Ramsey has had the wit to realize in his new anthology, *Contemporary Religious Poetry* (New York: Paulist Press; $9.95).

Ramsey is nothing if not eclectic in his choices, which run the gamut from traditional (Edwin Muir) to experimental (William Carlos Williams), from conservative (Eliot and Tate) to liberal (MacLeish) to radical (Daniel Berrigan and LeRoi Jones). Some of the best poems come as a surprise: an uncharacteristically graphic poem by David Ray "on a fifteenth century Flemish angel," several nice pieces by Robert Francis, and one of George Garrett's best poems, "Giant Killer." However, not every selection is a winner. Robert Creeley seems to turn up everywhere, but I've never met anyone who could quote him. Do we really have to tolerate the presence of such impostors?

All in all, *Contemporary Religious Poetry* is a splendid example of the anthologist's art, and it includes some of the most effective verse written in the past several decades. (TF)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does corrupt, and while no President in recent history has had *absolute* power, what they have is close enough for government work. It will be business as usual for any President after the first year, and no business at all for the last *two* years. We won't even grumble; we *expect* it to be this way. The President's cronies will be rewarded no matter how venal—or embarrassing—they become; he will embrace a cause only if it is politically popular. (Which President has ever taken on the tobacco growers' or distillers' lobbies or the UAW or ACLU or AFL-CIO?) We let the media go on and on about the differences between the candidates and the importance of the election, but we know that they don't believe it any more than we do, and they *know* we know. Still, it's a living. We live from hand to mouth, spiritually speaking, these days, manufacturing one quick make-believe warm fuzzy after another.

The Gipper had us going for a moment. Briefly, when we were younger and the world was full of hope and logical consequences, he made us believe that with hard work, decency, brains, and the grace of God, we could have it all. We *wanted* to believe, wanted it desperately, after the humiliation of the Johnson and Nixon administrations and the bland impotence of the Ford and Carter years. The nation roared in approbation when our boys conquered the midget Grenada. America was back! The Golden Era, from 1981-84, gave us hope. The last four years have stolen it away, possibly forever. If Reagan couldn't sustain us with what we gave him in 1980 and even more in 1984, it's hard to believe that anyone can. Our new President, whoever he is, may sustain *something*—his ego, his drive, his bank account, his autobiography—but history predicts that he will do it by spending America.

It's not morning here any more; it's mid-afternoon, and twilight approaches. What we have left is ourselves. We have fashioned the candidates in our own image, and their campaigning is, as some wit said recently, a demonstration of the "evil of two lessers." Our candidates deserve us, and we them. But at least we could stop pretending that our fates will be much better with one than with another. That in itself might be a step toward a slightly more honorable twilight.

Jane Greer edits Plains Poetry Journal.

Letter From B.U.

by S. Steven Powell

The Academic Blues

When I left the University of Chicago a few years ago, I felt the whole world lay ahead and that every opportunity was open to me. I decided to go on with graduate school but took some time off to work as a research associate for a think tank in Washington, DC. One problem that concerned me more than others was the breakdown of a bipartisan consensus on foreign policy. The search for plausible explanations for this seemed like a very worthwhile intellectual endeavor. It was, after all, George Washington who warned us in his Farewell Address of 1796 that "the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party . . . open the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passion."

During the Vietnam War the American public was subjected to the confusing spectacle of celebrities like Jane Fonda and Susan Sontag giving aid and comfort to the North Vietnamese while U.S. soldiers were dying in South Vietnam to prevent a Communist takeover. In the 1980's, it was no longer just cultural celebrities who found favor with America's Communist adversaries. Congressmen, senators, even presidential candidates now seem to have little compunction about political posturing from Havana or Managua.

I published an article about some of my findings but decided to direct my energy toward an in-depth study, a monograph or perhaps a book. I also decided to continue my formal education in a Ph.D. program because I wanted to teach on the university level at some future time.

Rather than return to Chicago, I decided to go to Boston University because it had an interdisciplinary doctoral program, the University Professors Program, originally created by President John Silber to provide an environment for serious study on unconventional topics. Silber struck me as someone not afraid to take unpopular positions and speak out on controversial issues of the day. Under his tutelage, B.U. seemed to be one of the few major universities attempting to stem the tide of mediocrity brought on by the left's ascendance in America's educational institutions.

When I arrived, I was welcomed by Betty Zisk, acting chair of B.U.'s political science department. "I'm afraid we'll have a hard time getting you into Howard Zinn's class," she explained. "It's always so full." Small wonder—Howard Zinn is a tenured Marxist whose chief preoccupation is activism, not scholarship. He was very popular not so much because students genuinely cared about Marxism, as because he was a well-known "gut teacher." Zinn candidly admits such evaluation criteria as tests are but unnecessary bourgeois formalities.

As I attended various classes I became increasingly disturbed by the widespread incompetence in the humanities and social science faculties. Even if the B.U. administration agreed on what constituted a proper liberal arts education, apparently it was having difficulty in filling the ranks of its faculty with people who shared a commitment to the same educational goals.

My first encounter with incompetence was with a political philosophy professor who could neither lecture nor lead a discussion. His discourses on Plato, Machiavelli, Locke, and Rousseau amounted to little more than a series of cynical anecdotes. The literature was brimming with insight on the possibilities and eternal problems of politics, yet little of any significance was ever talked about in class.

B.U.'s one course in the history of Western civilization attracts 200 students eager to fill the large lecture hall at the beginning of any semester, but within a few months only about 30 bother to attend the lectures. The reason? The professors who teach the class read out of the textbook or ramble incomprehensibly. Last year's students circulated a petition to protest this deplorable state of affairs. To their dismay, they discovered that the professor against whom they were protesting was the chairman of the department with which they were going to file the petition.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The first major goal of most applicants pursuing an academic career at B.U. and other universities is to secure tenure. The most important criterion on the tenure track is publication. But being published in the academic world is not necessarily a good indicator of competence for university faculty appointment. Many scholarly journals are little more than outlets for academics whose work is so marginal as to be otherwise unpublishable. The articles published there are seldom read by more than a handful of people, two of whom include the author and the journal's editor.

Another important aspect of the tenure process is the collegiality of the candidate. Mediocrity and liberal bias at B.U. tend to be self-perpetuating. The newcomer who brings fresh ideas or a greater grasp of a subject is likely to be perceived by other faculty members as a threat. Also, notwithstanding the outspoken conservative image of B.U.'s president, the politics of tenure work against those with the courage to be out of step with the liberal nostrums that dominate many departments.

After a discussion section late in the semester, one political science teaching assistant let her hair down with some of her students: "Neither Andy (the professor) nor I can write what we really want to write," she said. "Some people call me Communist, and that's okay. Andy is about to get tenure, and all he needs is President Silber's signature. I cannot wait to see how he teaches after he receives tenure."

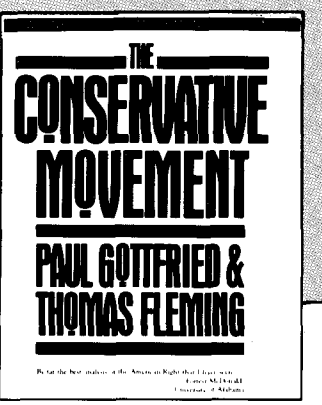
Silber has been an outspoken critic of the tenure system largely because it protects this biased elitism. But, unfortunately, his search for new faculty members has not clearly reflected a commitment to long-term excellence.

Located in the same town as Harvard and MIT, B.U. is plagued with an inferiority complex. In an attempt to raise its standing, it has been willing to pay dearly for fame and publicity. For instance, the librarian of special collections spends considerable time and resources to obtain Hollywood memorabilia, which end up in the basement storage of the library. Lavish parties are thrown for invited movie celebrities in hope that they will donate personal papers or effects to the university. Just what scholarly purpose all of this serves is hardly clear to anyone.

The most puzzling aspect of my experience at B.U. was that so many of those tenured professors who are decidedly nonliberal seemed apathetic about improving the academic programs of their own university. Establishing a liberal arts core curriculum has been stalled for years. Professors whose integrity in written work I respected seemed reluctant to stand up and be counted on any issue that would cause disagreement with the majority of their colleagues.

Serious students ought not to harbor illusions about academic life. While there certainly are professors who care

NEW FROM TWAYNE PUBLISHERS



The Conservative Movement

Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming

Appearing in a crucial presidential election year, this is a timely analysis of one of the most powerful political and social forces in America. It is the first objective critical approach to the conservative movement, clarifying its ideologies, goals, impact, differences with liberalism, and growth from 1945 to 1987. Quoting politicans, lobbyists, journalists and intellectuals — including Burke, Buckley, Kirk and many others — scholars Gottfried and Fleming clearly outline the characteristics of conservatism: an anti-Soviet stance, advocacy of unlimited material opportunity, and exaltation of custom as the protector of social morality. A significant contribution of this study is its exposé of the movement's fragmentation. In their thought-provoking chapter on conservatism's future after Reagan, the authors predict that this fragmentation may be the movement's demise.

Table of Contents

1. **Forming a Worldview: The Conservatism of the Fifties**
2. **Before and After Goldwater: Conservatism in the Sixties**
3. **Ivory Tower/Ivory Gate: The Conservative Mind on Campus**
4. **Revolt of the Intellectuals: The Neoconservatives**
5. **Populist Rebellion: The New Right**
6. **Postscript: Reagan and Beyond**

Bibliographic Essay
Index

Feb. 1988 5½ × 8½ 160 pp.
0-8057-9723-8 Cloth $18.95
0-8057-9724-6 Paper $ 7.95

☐ **Yes, please send me *The Conservative Movement* by Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming at $18.95 Cloth (ISBN 797238) or $7.95 Paper (ISBN 797246)**

You must enclose payment with order. Total enclosed $_____

Payment Method: ☐ Check enclosed (payable to G. K. Hall) ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AmEx

Card #_____ Exp. Date _____

Signature_____

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Send to: Twayne Publishers (A division of G. K. Hall)
70 Lincoln St. • Boston, MA 02111 or call TOLL-FREE 1-800-343-2806

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about their students, there are also many others who teach only for the money. More than once I found that faculty members took an interest in me only if they could use me or my work for their own interests or publishing efforts. It was understood when I came to B.U. that I was engaged in major study of special interest groups involved in thwarting U.S. intelligence activities and defense policies. Compared with most Ph.D. studies, my work had practical value, especially in the context of ongoing problems in Central America, the Middle East, and in East-West relations.

As it turned out, when I completed my academic courses, I could not find a sponsor for my dissertation, although I had adequate faculty support to put together a dissertation committee. My academic advisor, a leading neoconservative sociologist, was unwilling to be a sponsor, although he privately acknowledged the importance of my work. I turned to another professor in my department who had written a book on a closely related subject. Although he too favored my work, he deferred any sponsorship. The reasons given were basically twofold: it was unconventional for a student to get academic credit for work that would also be published as a book, and it was unconventional for a student to proceed on a project without adequate faculty supervision or guidance.

There was some truth to the latter, but it was not for lack of wanting or seeking criticism and assistance from the faculty. Ironically, the faculty members who objected on this ground were the very ones who had always been too busy with their work, travels, and conferences to have time to read or evaluate my dissertation. The most disconcerting part of the whole experience was my uncertainty about whether anyone really wanted me to succeed. I wrote a personal letter to the university president and to the provost, asking why the university could not find merit in a student who fulfilled the dissertation requirements and succeeded in publishing a book at the same time. I argued that the main criteria for a dissertation should be the subject matter and the originality of the work. I was confident that my dissertation met both of these.

Months passed, and I was still receiving mixed signals from the powers that be. Finally, I decided to abandon the attempt to secure academic credit for my 700-page study (a project that I had spent three years on). I realized that everyone would be much happier if I wrote a dissertation on some irrelevant academic subject about which no one was likely to object.

I decided to write a whole new dissertation about a more mundane subject: entrepreneurship. I was confident that this would be "safe," having relatively few political overtones. As far back as to Adam Smith, economists had mostly ignored the role and importance of entrepreneurial input. For Smith, the invisible hand was a self-regulating mechanism independent of the economic leadership of the entrepreneur. The two major sources of literature on the subject came from the Austrian and supply-side schools of economics.

My dissertation committee included my advisor, a sociologist, a political scientist, and a renowned developmental economist—one of those B.U. professors wooed away from Harvard with a fat salary offering. At first I couldn't understand why the economist kept coming up with a host of problems concerning my work. My arguments and empirical evidence supported the thesis that the entrepreneur provided the mainspring of economic progress. He objected to my favorable assessment of supply-side economics and recommended that I delete references to it when I revised my work. "There are many economists who believe that supply-side economics has been a dismal failure," he told me, obviously counting himself among them. (It was the fifth year of an economic expansion that had witnessed the creation of some 14 million new jobs in the United States.)

The other professors on my dissertation committee assured me that political bias was not at issue and that I had better pursue the course of least resistance, deliver what the economist wanted, and be done with it. Above all, I was counseled not to do anything that would cause more problems for him. It was becoming increasingly clear that the root of his objections to my work was my libertarian philosophy. He had, after all, built his entire career by championing state intervention, regulation, and planning. No graduate student was going to challenge the basic New Deal-Keynesian faith without paying a price. "Maybe you could play more to your strengths—the noneconomic aspects—and attempt less in the economic realm," he wrote at one point in his evaluation of my dissertation. My advisor and committee chairman took a cautious but concurring position. "No reasonable person today believes in strict laissez faire," he noted, dismissing the value and legitimacy of libertarian economics.

I'll never forget those last all-nighters needed to finish the revisions on the dissertation. In the end it was only the economist that held out on signing the approval for my graduation. When I drove up to his house to drop off the final dissertation corrections on the eve of graduation, I wasn't surprised to find bumper stickers for left-wing Massachusetts political candidates on the two Volvos in his driveway.

Boston University has often been applauded for having reestablished high standards after liberal educational policies brought it to the brink of ruin in the early 1970's. But like most universities, B.U. is finding it difficult to achieve excellence because it runs contrary to the leveling goals of liberalism itself. Moreover, the task has only become more difficult in the 1980's because liberalism has been transformed by prejudices and militant ideologies of the left.

Courage and honesty are needed to admit that liberal arts education at B.U. and at most other universities is largely failing in its two most basic tasks—first, to foster an appreciation of the values and institutions that have expanded liberty and opportunity, and second, to clarify the responsibilities of citizenship.

There are no easy solutions or quick fixes to the sorry state of higher education. Concerned faculty with tenure can certainly afford to take a clear stand and challenge the ruling ethos and norms of the educational establishment itself. And if entrenched faculty majorities are reluctant to change, it might be good to encourage the younger generation of students to shake things up a bit. In that case, sponsoring a student involved in controversial research and writing might even be viewed as an opportunity, rather than a liability.

S. Steven Powell is the author of Covert Cadre *(Green Hill Publishers).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ACADEMY

The New Obscurantism

by Nicholas Davidson

Santayana's commonplace observation that "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it" is not popular with professional historians, who suffer from chronic disagreement about what the past means, or whether it means anything at all. Such embarrassment is understandable: Since the First World War, the most salient lessons of the past have been systematically obscured in the academy, for reasons that are both structural and political.

The ever-increasing specialization of scholarly disciplines has lead to a continuous refinement of knowledge in many fields, but it also works to discourage the large conceptions that are inherently necessary to treat large topics.

Who profits? In the short run, clearly the ever more segmented guilds of Americanists, Europeanists, medievalists, and classicists. Specialization confers authority in proportion to arcaneness. Lacking the empirical tests of hard science, the study of history dissolves into a kaleidoscope of specialties, whose only common feature is their mutual exclusivity. While knowledge proliferates, understanding decreases.

Historians, most of whom would do far better to spend their time assimilating a past fewer and fewer of them know well, and transmitting this distilled knowledge to their students, who desperately need such background, are under constant pressure to demonstrate "originality." They have responded through countless publications in a growing welter of ever more inconsequential journals. Interpretive revolution, which can only come from individual genius or the convulsive pressure of long-prepared events, is institutionalized, trivialized, and finally vitiated. In the meantime, true originality, which consists in discerning useful relations between apparently disparate facts, is structurally discouraged. A few oddball generalists resist the tide, but in general, historians have less and less to say to the public because they have less and less to say to each other.

The universal refrain is fast becoming, "It is so complex we cannot know." Every obvious connection is severed: between the bourgeois ethos and the Industrial Revolution; between the French Enlightenment and the Reign of Terror; between German anti-Semitism and the rise of Nazism. The structure of academia systematically rewards scholars for destroying the connective tissue that makes knowledge intelligible and thereby useful.

Deconstructionism is the logical end result of all this. As the high priests of intellectual disintegration, deconstructionists have come to enjoy a certain aristocratic status in academia, like murderers in a prison. (It is an analogy they would relish.) Those who sacrifice continuity to change, simplicity to complexity, and certainty to doubt relinquish half the basis for sound judgment and become the camp followers of whatever revolution is currently in vogue. In the extreme case of the deconstructionists, like the anarchists before them, they succumb to a parricidal hatred of the very bases of civilization.

Academics tend to dislike answers, for there is no profit in them. They provide no rationale for further grants. Worse, by making human experience intelligible to ordinary people, they threaten the hegemony of specialists, "experts." Such is the sociostructural impulsion to moral relativism. Sociobiology, which threatens to discover a biological basis for morality, is demonized. Economics, ethics, and sexuality become formless grab bags of "choice." The professionals have still not forgiven Schliemann for discovering Troy: the City of Priam was far more congenial as a myth.

The destruction of limits, whether they are valid or not, also serves a more specifically political function. Extreme environmental determinism persists in the social sciences years after it has been empirically discredited, because it usefully obscures the social imperatives that social reforms violate at the price of creating predictable misery. For instance, no person with an even moderately open mind can be conversant with recent work on fetal masculinization and tomboyism or on sex differentiation in brain structure, yet still take seriously the unisexist doctrine that constitutes our current national philosophy of gender. Ironically, in light of the continuing progress of knowledge in many areas, we live today in a time of intellectual impoverishment, fueled by the deliberate neglect of the obvious.

The new obscurantism performs the same politicized function in history as in the behavioral sciences. If the past is too complicated to grasp, if each period is so unique that there are no general principles to be deduced, the way is cleared for every fanciful social reformer and every hate-driven would-be revolutionary who comes down the pike. The vociferous 60's rejection of history as "irrelevant" rested on precisely this reasoning. To people dazzled by visions of utopia, nothing fixed and certain is of interest, even if it is central to the human condition. Like the Victorians before us, we live estranged from our own advancing civilization, in an intellectual universe whose attempts at wisdom and morality are cut off from the very empirical sources of its knowledge.

The modern left cannot study history and still remain a left. In history as in behavioral science, facts are fatal. No wonder "objectivity" is despised; no wonder Ranke's famous ideal, that historians should strive to understand the past *Wie es eigentlich war*, "As it really was," is dismissed as a naive conceit, to be left behind with the dross of the 19th century.

It has consequently become a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

standard superstition of the late 20th century that the causes of events are obscure and inscrutable—so complex "we may never know what really happened." In the course of the past generation, concepts like "facts," "evidence," "human nature," "truth," and "reality" have fallen out of fashion and out of use. In the social sciences in particular, a scholarly line of reasoning is no longer said to "prove" anything. It is at best "suggestive," as if Science were an insincere suitor determined at all costs to avoid intimacy with the putative object of his efforts.

The argument that things are inherently obscure itself becomes a new form of obscurantism: important events are so complex that only experts can even begin to grasp them. Too, the defensive pettifogging such a notion encourages is highly congenial to the insecure personalities who notoriously flee to the protection of the academic grove in disproportionate numbers. The cause of social reform and the exclusivity of the guild are reinforced at the same time: What "progressive" academic could possibly resist?

The only victim is public understanding. By refusing to diagnose the causes of major phenomena, social scientists behave in the manner of a coroner who, confronted with a corpse shot through the chest, writes "Cause of Death: Unknown," because he cannot be entirely sure whether death resulted from cardiac arrest, respiratory failure, or massive internal hemorrhaging. Mark Twain's observation that "scholars have spread much darkness" so that "soon we shall know nothing at all" is singularly descriptive of the state of social science in the late 20th century. Excessive specialization artificially ranks the small over the large, the parts over the whole, and the obscure over the intelligible. As a result, modern scholars are often unable to progress beyond the conceptions of the great founders of modern history—Gibbon, Guizot, Ranke—in light of the knowledge that has accumulated since. Like modern American literature, with its addiction to the cult of the Significant Detail, modern history has long since lost sight of the wood for the trees.

In the newly darkened universe of thought, scholars stumble about over the dim shapes of questions whose answers might once have been considered obvious: the destruction of classical civilization by the unchecked growth of the Roman state; the elimination of famine in 18th-century Europe by the lifting of feudal barriers to free commerce in grain; the apotheosis of omnisexuality and the disintegration of the family. Cause and effect are severed, and the only tie still binding American academics is a limitless appetite for government funding. Those, like Allan Bloom, who expect modern civilization to be redeemed from such a corrupt source are in for an indefinite wait.

Nicholas Davidson is the author of The Failure of Feminism *(Prometheus).*

DISEASE

AIDing Society

by Wayne Lutton

Private Vice Versus Public Health

"So the plague defied all medicines; no cure, no help could be possible, nothing could follow but death. . . . The strange temper of the people . . . contributed extremely to their own destruction."
—Daniel Defoe
A Journal of the Plague Year
(1721)

Until recently, the United States has enjoyed unquestioned success in public health. Diseases once common have all but vanished with improvements in sanitation and personal hygiene. Infectious diseases, especially where no cure is available, have been controlled by the tried and true methods of: (1) finding out who is infected; (2) tracing those persons who have contacted the carriers in a manner known to spread the disease; (3) determining if carriers are likely to spread their infection; (4) quarantining of those individuals who refuse to refrain from endangering the health of the as-yet uninfected; and (5) the closing of public places where disease-spreading activity takes place. By such means have outbreaks of scarlet fever, smallpox, and typhoid been halted in this century.

Calling AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) the "highest public health priority," President Reagan released his fiscal 1989 budget, which includes $1.3 billion for AIDS research and prevention. On April 28, 1988, the Senate approved the program by a vote of 87-4. (Senator Jesse Helms, the principal opponent, pointed out that nothing in the spending package did anything to protect the part of our population that has not been exposed to the disease.) The House was expected to approve it as well. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force agreed that this figure "represents a significant (38 percent) increase" over current AIDS funding and was praised by NGLTF director Jeffrey Levi as "an important statement of policy and intent by the Federal Government."

Like President Reagan, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop has repeatedly referred to AIDS as the "number one" menace to public health. Still, though AIDS is an always-fatal disease, traditional public health practices have yet to be implemented to contain its spread.

How it came to pass that this particular virus was granted an immunity from standard methods of control is one of the topics explored in Randy Shilts's compelling history of the early years of the AIDS epidemic in America (*And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, St. Martin's Press; 630 pp.; $24.95). Shilts is a homosexual writer who, since 1982, has been reporting on AIDS full-time for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The book is organized chronologically and takes us back and forth from San Francisco to New York, Atlanta, Washington, DC, Central Africa, and France. We meet homosexual activists, politicians, public health officials, medical researchers, general practitioners, and some of the first people to succumb to the mysterious virus. Shilts's study confirms what a number of students of this epidemic had already perceived, namely, that AIDS is the first politically protected disease in modern history.

Even before AIDS emerged, "out-of-the-closet" homosexuals were being "washed by tide after tide of increasingly serious infections." By 1980, sexually active homosexuals were al-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ready saturated with syphilis and gonorrhea, hepatitis A and B, and various parasitic infections. Studies in Los Angeles revealed that 93 percent of male homosexuals were infected with cytomegalovirus, a variety of herpes linked to cancer. Epstein-Barr virus, another cancer-causing microbe, was pandemic among them. These infections were marked by latency periods during which infectious carriers looked and felt well, often long before they exhibited clinical manifestations of disease. As homosexual activity became commercialized, with bathhouses, sex clubs, spas, and tours flourishing across the country and around the world, there was no stopping the spread of diseases. Homosexual doctors who voiced concern about the frightful condition of their "community" were denounced by other homosexual leaders for being "sexual fascists." A prominent San Francisco homosexual psychotherapist, Gary Walsh, counseled that "promiscuity was a means to exorcise the guilt and self-alienation ingrained in all gay men by a heterosexual society clinging to the obsolete values of monogramy." (He later died of AIDS.)

As early as spring 1981, a once-rare form of pneumonia, Pneumocystis carinii, was turning up with alarming frequency among male homosexuals. Drs. Michael Gottlieb and Joel Weisman wrote what would be the first article relating to AIDS, for the June 5, 1981, issue of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, published by the federal Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. Gottlieb and Weisman noted that all their clients had a history of sexually transmitted infections prior to the onset of Pneumocystis pneumonia. They went on to observe that, "The fact that these patients were all homosexuals suggests an association between some aspect of homosexual lifestyle or disease acquired through sexual contact and Pneumocystis pneumonia in this population." When they submitted their article to the CDC, it was entitled, "Pneumocystis pneumonia in homosexual men—Los Angeles." However, before the publication, CDC editors dropped any reference to homosexuality from the title, in order not to offend the sensibilities of organized homosexuals. The unwritten policy, Shilts points out, was: "Don't offend the gays and don't inflame the homophobes. These were the twin horns on which the handling of this epidemic would be torn from the first day of the epidemic."

In addition to Pneumocystis, homosexuals and newly arrived Haitian immigrants were found to be coming down with taxoplasmosis, a lethal infection of the brain. Other maladies began to appear. Following extensive testing, a homosexual in San Francisco was discovered to be infected with cryptococcus, a parasite that inhabits bird feces. Pigeons had been depositing droppings in San Francisco for over a century, without humans becoming infected by them. University of California experts were left speechless when one of their homosexual patients was diagnosed as having chronic diarrhea caused by cryptosporidium, a parasite that lives in the bowels of sheep. One anxious doctor asked the preeminent expert of cryptosporidium, a professor at the University of Iowa agriculture school, how they treated infected sheep. He was told, "There is no treatment. We shoot them." This particular patient soon died, making medical history as the first human being whose cause of death was listed as a disease of sheep.

So many homosexuals were succumbing to a host of lethal infections that medical authorities designated their condition GRID—Gay Related Immune Deficiency. The typical GRID sufferer had sex with 1,100 men in his lifetime; some boasted as many as 20,000 sexual contacts. Footloose homosexuals quickly spread the virus across our country and around the world. At the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control in San Francisco, Dr. Selma Dritz realized that the bathhouses were "biological cesspools for infection" and that a "textbook" public health response would be simply to close them down as a menace to health. Dr. Donald Francis of the CDC characterized the commercial homosexual sex industry as an "amplification system" for the disease. Such establishments ensured that AIDS would proliferate among homosexual males. At this point, Shilts remarks, "Common sense dictated that bathhouses be closed down. Common sense, however, rarely carried much weight in regard to AIDS policy."

In Shilts's account, AIDS is personified by "Patient Zero," one Gaetan Dugas, a strikingly handsome Air Canada steward who apparently carried AIDS from France to the homosexual playgrounds of North America. Doctors have traced at least 40 of the first 248 homosexual AIDS cases, as of April 1982, to Dugas or someone who had sex with him. Long after he knew that he had the disease, Dugas continued to haunt gay bars and bathhouses. After sodomizing his partners, he would turn up the lights, point to his Kaposi's sarcoma lesions, and announce, "I've got gay cancer. I'm going to die and so are you." Almost until the day he died (at the age of 31 in 1984) Dugas managed to find men anxious to couple with him (he had over 2,400 sexual contacts during his lifetime. His partners, many infected with AIDS by him, in turn have had intimate contact with untold thousands of others). Dugas figured that since someone had infected him, he could give it to others. When a doctor advised him to quit, he replied, "It's their duty to protect themselves. They know what's going on there. They've heard about this disease. I've got it. They can get it too."

The CDC had evidence by mid-1982 that GRID was an infectious disease. However, not to alarm the public, Drs. James Curran and Harold Jaffe reassured reporters that it wasn't. In the meantime, GRID was redesignated AIDS, a sexually neutral term.

As time went on, doctors discovered that the range of infections related to AIDS was much broader than they had previously suspected. Among these were Burkitt's lymphoma, a virus-linked lymph cancer, and Kaposi's sarcoma, a usually mild variety of skin cancer that turned lethal among AIDS carriers. Mycobacterium avium-intracellular, a horrific fungal infection normally found in birds, was detected in the bone marrow of AIDS patients. AIDS was confirmed, by late 1982, to cause extensive damage to the central nervous system, with researchers informing members of the American Neurological Association that some patients were dying of brain disorders, their cerebral matter reduced to "a boggy mass." Other fungal infections of birds, cats, sheep, and deer, as well as cancers on the tongue, in the rec-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tum, and in the brain were added to the growing list of AIDS-related complications.

The blood banking industry comes under heavy fire from Shilts, and deservedly so. Evidence had accumulated by late 1981, indicating that AIDS was a blood-borne infection that could be transmitted through blood transfusions. In 1982 the CDC reported cases of hemophiliacs infected with AIDS via contaminated clotting factor. Yet, the American Association of Blood Banks joined with homosexual rights groups in denouncing claims of transfusion-related AIDS and appeals made by hemophiliacs that homosexuals be discouraged from donating blood. Before the actual AIDS virus was discovered, scientists at the CDC recognized that nearly 90 percent of those infected with AIDS also showed signs of hepatitis B. They recommended that blood banks test blood for traces of past hepatitis infection—a proposal that was flatly rejected by the blood industry. Shilts reveals that at least 12,000 Americans were infected with AIDS acquired from transfusions "largely administered after the CDC had futilely begged the blood industry for action to prevent spread of the disease."

Once the HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) was identified and an effective blood test became available, the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, a homosexual rights organization, threatened to go to court to block release of the test. Here was a test that could save the lives of the uninfected—including the lives of uninfected homosexuals—yet homosexual activists worked ceaselessly to prevent its use. As the author observes, failure to be tested "meant you might be carrying a lethal virus, which you could give to others . . . There was also the broader public health question of how you can control a disease if you decline to find out who is infected."

Shilts ends his review in mid-1985. By then the agent causing AIDS had been isolated, testing of the blood supply had finally commenced, and, with the death of actor Rock Hudson, AIDS had become a national issue. Shilts chides the Reagan administration for not responding sooner to a health crisis that was largely confined to homosexuals and intravenous drug users. Given that many, perhaps most, sexually active homosexuals were already infected with AIDS before the disease was discovered, it is difficult to see what Reagan or anyone else could have done to save their lives. Konstantin Berlandt, a homosexual activist from San Francisco, expressed the attitude of Gay Liberationists when he claimed that it is "society's responsibility to find the medical technology to prevent all sexually transmitted diseases, rather than the gay community's responsibility to keep sexuality in line with what medical technology can cure."

Shilts concedes that formulation of AIDS policy has "never been animated by rational forces." He goes so far as to cite, with approval, a Danish AIDS specialist, Dr. Ib Bygbjerg, who despaired that, "Gay radicals are holding public policy hostage to their politics. We need to stop this disease, and we're not being allowed to." In many respects, *And the Band Played On* is to the development of the AIDS epidemic what *The Valachi Papers* was to the Mafia: a record that only an insider could have written.

It has become increasingly clear that it is in the self-interest of the public to take whatever measures are necessary to control AIDS. Recent scientific discoveries offer little assurance that this is anything but a serious medical problem.

AIDS is a dynamic disease. The retrovirus that apparently causes it, HIV, mutates at a much higher rate than any previously encountered. Within the lifetime of an AIDS patient, the original strain of virus that started the infection can mutate into several new strains, all of which continue to proliferate. And the strains are often different enough that were a vaccine effective against one strain, it would fail to protect against another. A scientist at the University of Colorado medical research center in Denver confided to this author that many in the field are convinced that a vaccine for AIDS is a "theoretical impossibility." Given that HIV, like all other viruses and retroviruses, is not an independent life form but a piece of genetic material that becomes a part of an infected cell, researchers at the Center of Molecular Biology in Madrid and the Pasteur Institute of Paris suggest that any vaccine that might protect someone from acquiring AIDS would destroy the person's immune system, thus causing a disease similar to AIDS.

A team of scientists from Norway, Sweden, and West Germany have established that a person does not need a cut, wound, rash or other abrasion of the skin to acquire AIDS, since HIV has been found to thrive in the Langerhans cells, which are present in skin and mucous membranes. Langerhans cells are relatively easy to infect and these in-vitro infected cells can in turn infect other cells.

The spring issue of the quarterly *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* reported that people infected with AIDS become more infectious as time passes, increasing the risk to others.

Strange as it may seem, as Vernon Mark of Harvard Medical School points out, we still do not know how rapidly AIDS is spreading or how many are currently infected. This is because federal health officials have yet to conduct a cross-sectional analysis to discover the extent and intensity of AIDS infection. Mark is foremost among those calling for a series of epidemiological studies, utilizing population sample statistics, to determine the degree of HIV infection among various demographic segments of our society. (The oft-repeated figure of one to 1.5 million AIDS carriers in the U.S. is a 1986 CDC guestimate. In 1985, a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine* estimated that 1,765,000 were already infected. More recently, the CDC suggested that for every case of AIDS, there are 10 cases of ARC [AIDS Related Complex, a host of symptoms including weight loss, fever, night sweats, fatigue, persistent diarrhea, that are themselves often fatal or are precursors to full-blown AIDS] and for every case of ARC there are 10 asymptomatic carriers. With 59,287 official cases of AIDS reported in the CDC's *AIDS Weekly Surveillance Report* for April 11, 1988, this would give the U.S. 583,550 cases of ARC and a total of some 5,835,550 actual AIDS carriers.)

Not only do we not know how many people are currently infected, but "civil rights" protection has been granted to carriers, so that, in many states and municipalities, even doctors performing surgery on the AIDS-infected are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not informed about the condition of their patients. Nor, where such guidelines are in force, do doctors have the right to refuse to operate on a patient with AIDS. This situation is leading many health-care workers to consider if they want to continue in medicine.

Although the case for applying traditional public health measures to the AIDS epidemic grows stronger by the week, the likelihood of this happening anytime soon seems less and less. For the Democratic Party, homosexuals are a key component of its metropolitan election strategy—the lavender layer of the Rainbow Coalition. Party leaders support the "Gay Rights" amendment to the Civil Rights Act and a presidential executive order banning anti-homosexual discrimination in the federal government, including the military. They oppose prohibition of homosexual immigrants and defend the rights of lesbians and homosexual males to child custody (for example, on April 13, 1988, Rep. Pat Schroeder [D-CO] spoke before the homosexual Gertrude Stein Democratic Club in Washington, DC, and said that liberals must take back the concept of the American family from the right wing).

The Reagan record has been "mixed," at best. The most sensible statements and proposals on AIDS have come from the Department of Education, not the Public Health Service or Surgeon General's Office. Surgeon General Koop has not been reined-in, despite his medically inaccurate AIDS Report that was enthusiastically endorsed by homosexual activists. The administration has since mailed an AIDS brochure that includes more misleading assertions to 107 million American households. Furthermore, the administration has pointedly failed to throw its support behind the two most important pieces of AIDS-related legislation introduced in the 100th Congress, by Rep. William Danneymeyer (R-Calif.): H.R. 2272, calling for mandatory reporting of HIV infection to public health authorities in every state, and H.R. 2273, which requires AIDS tests for hospital admissions between the ages of 15 and 49, premarital applicants, clients of sexually transmitted disease clinics, and convicted prostitutes and IV drug users. Will George Bush take a tougher stand on AIDS?

AIDS is one of those issues—I believe immigration is another—that will determine whether America survives as a viable entity. The response thus far is not encouraging. Surveying the situation, I have that sinking feeling that Andrew Hacker was right when he wrote in his 1970 book, *The End of the American Era*, "The United States no longer has the will to be a great international power, just as it is no longer an ascending nation at home. . . . We are now at that turning point ancient philosophers called *stasis*, a juncture at which it becomes pointless to call for rehabilitation or renewal. Such efforts would take a discipline we do not have, a spirit of sacrifice which has ceased to exist."

Wayne Lutton is currently director of Summit Research Institute, Manitou Springs, Colorado. He has coauthored a book on AIDS and testified on AIDS education and public policy before the U.S. Congress.

RICHARD ARMEY
A Texas professor whose Congress-watching inspired him to run for Congress—and win.

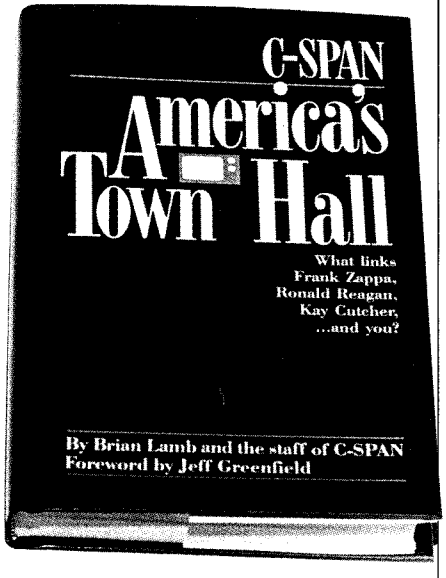
KAY CUTCHER
Joined with others in Sioux City, Iowa, to form the "Sioux City Watchdogs." Her interest in Congress-watching landed her in *People* and on "Donahue."

PHIL DONAHUE
The man who hosts controversial talk shows on AIDS, prostitution, and surrogate motherhood thinks C-SPAN is "the most exciting show in town."

JOHN DUNCAN
This 33-year-old high school graduate drove trucks out of Phoenix. His growing interest in the political process, fostered by public affairs television, took him out of the cab of a truck and into a college classroom.

RUSSELL EPPERSON
A prisoner in Missouri who watches C-SPAN in his cell.

98 tales from the newly emerging TV republic


C-SPAN
America's Town Hall
What links Frank Zappa, Ronald Reagan, Kay Cutcher, ...and you?
By Brian Lamb and the staff of C-SPAN
Foreword by Jeff Greenfield

The cable television industry created the C-SPAN public affairs network nearly a decade ago. But who's watching? And why?

"America's Town Hall" is must-reading for anyone interested in television or public policy. It shows how Americans are using C-SPAN's televised access to the political process in novel, practical, and even revolutionary ways.

"[C-SPAN] is the driving of the golden spike that unites the people with their government through television."
—Tom Shales

ACROPOLIS BOOKS LTD.
Available at bookstores $19.95
or call 1-800-654-9000 (with credit card)

EDWARD and NANCY REDDIN KIENHOLZ
Idaho sculptors who use C-SPAN audio for background stimulus while they create their socially conscious works of art.

MIKE PETERS
For him, C-SPAN is like "an AP wire machine." This nationally syndicated cartoonist gets views of newsmakers that help shape his work.

JOHN PUTKA
A Cincinnati priest who hopes to interest students of the television generation in the political process by having them watch Congress.

RONALD REAGAN
The first president with instantaneous technological access to Congress phones members as he watches them debate.

FRANK ZAPPA
This counter-culture rock musician says he enjoys the "anthropological implications" of public affairs TV.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On 'Prankster From Tripoli'

I read Antony T. Sullivan's "Prankster From Tripoli" in the May 1988 issue with dismay.

In April 1986 the United States retaliated against the Libyan regime for a long string of aggressive actions by Muammar el-Qaddafi against Americans and U.S. interests. This use of force had remarkable efficacy, for Qaddafi's bellicosity against the United States has since then come to a virtual end. For over two years, the fanatic of Tripoli has been nearly dormant, and there is good reason to expect him to stay quiet for some time to come.

In light of this record, it is strange to read Mr. Sullivan's condemnation of the American raid and his preference for "silent contempt." It is even more peculiar to learn from Mr. Sullivan that the raid was harmful because it hurt opposition elements within the Libyan military—an exact counterpart to the argument purveyed by Soviet apologists that any effort of American assertion harms the standing of doves in the Kremlin.

—Daniel Pipes
Philadelphia, PA

Antony Sullivan Replies

Mr. Pipes repeats the tired mythology about the United States bombardment of Libya being occasioned by a "long string" of aggressive actions mounted by Qaddafi against Americans and U.S. interests. In fact, Qaddafi's terrorism was the *excuse*, not the reason, for the American bombing of Tripoli and Banghazi. The number of attacks launched by Libya against American targets was minor compared to the number directed against American interests by the far more professional terrorists in Syria and Iran.

The principal reasons why the United States chose to strike at Libya rather than at either Syria or Iran were Libya's military vulnerability, its marginal role in Middle East politics, and its lack of a committed great-power patron. The attack on Libya was also launched to appease the domestic hysteria over terrorism which the Reagan administration had done much to fan and from which it benefited politically.

U.S. State Department data showed that Libya carried out a maximum of only three terrorist attacks against American targets during the entire period from 1980 through 1985, as compared to a total of 46 against Arab and African targets. Israeli analysts report that out of 408 terrorist incidents recorded during 1985, Libyan hit teams were responsible for only 11, eight of which were directed at Libyan dissidents. A U.S. State Department report shows that during 1985 Syria and Iran each mounted some 30 terrorist attacks (mostly through surrogates), with the United States as the primary target. In 1985 Islamic Jihad, which is closely affiliated with Iran, kidnaped four Americans in Lebanon. It is surely difficult to argue that by early 1986 Libya had perpetrated an inordinate number of attacks against American targets or constituted such a threat to U.S. national security that military action was imperative.

Contrary to what Mr. Pipes asserts, Qaddafi has hardly been "nearly dormant" during the last two years. Never a major threat to the United States, he does continue to control a terrorist network which U.S. officials fear has the potential to cause significant instability in several African countries. In May 1988 L. Paul Bremer III, the U.S. State Department's ranking authority on terrorism, described Qaddafi as "active" and an instigator of terrorist actions worldwide through the Japanese Red Army organization and the psychotic Palestinian renegade Abu Nidal who now has his operational headquarters in Tripoli. During April 1988 alone, U.S. officials detected Qaddafi's fingerprints on five terrorist operations in three Latin American nations and one European country.

The fact is that the American raid did shore up Qaddafi's position as dictator and has discouraged action against him by his opponents in the Libyan military.

In 1985 and early 1986, Qaddafi was in trouble. The Libyan army was increasingly opposed to his curtailment of its power in favor of the "armed masses" led by the Revolutionary Committee which Qaddafi had created. In the spring of 1985, Libyan officers made two attempts to assassinate Qaddafi. A third attempt was made in August 1985. In November 1985, a nervous Qaddafi evidently arranged for the assassination of Colonel Hassan Ishkal, the commander of

M·O·V·I·N·G·?

LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

To assure uninterrupted delivery of *Chronicles*, please notify us in advance. Send change of address on this form with the mailing label from your latest issue of *Chronicles* to: Subscription Department, *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, Illinois 61054.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Sirte military region and an outspoken opponent of Qaddafi's downgrading of the Libyan army. By then, Qaddafi had little affection for the USSR and may even have feared that the Kremlin might act to remove him from power. This growing opposition in the Libyan army, and Qaddafi's disillusionment with the Soviet Union, were dealt major setbacks by the American attack on Libya.

By spectacularly demonstrating the incompetence of the Libyan army, the U.S. raid reduced the prestige of the very entity most disaffected with Qaddafi. Given the military's failure at a moment of crisis, Libyan officers could hardly argue any longer that they could provide more effective leadership for the country than Qaddafi. Indeed, there have been no known coup attempts by the army during the last two years. The military's humiliation has only benefited the fanatical Qaddafi supporters in the Revolutionary Committees. The U.S. raid also seems to have stilled Qaddafi's fears concerning the Soviet Union. Now, Qaddafi asserts that the defense of Libya is "vital" to Soviet interests and that Libya and the USSR are involved in a "common struggle."

On 'The Genderless Society'

Matthew Kaufman's article on the new age genderless military (*Chronicles*, May 1988) reminds me of an experience I had last year. I drove into an Air Force Base which hosted two strategic Air Command wings, including strategic alert aircraft. My identification was examined, and I was waved through by a military security guard . . . in a maternity smock. As it turns out, alert aircraft now are being guarded by young girls carrying M-16's. My wife hit the nail on the head when she remarked that our terrorist enemies around the world must be getting a good chuckle out of that situation.

Perhaps you could build an interesting article around the AF Social Actions offices. Some critics portray them as the military parallel to NOW and NAACP.

—Name and address withheld by request

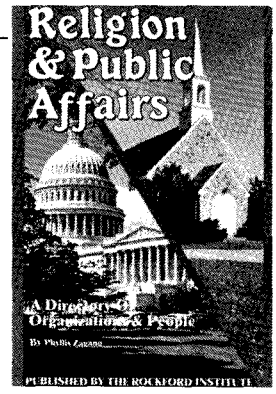
On a 'Letter From a State of Mind'

Having worked on the *Commentary* staff when Norman Podhoretz's predecessor Elliot E. Cohen was editor, I believe that a partial answer to Prof. Neusner's quandary about why the magazine does not print "religious thinkers" (*Chronicles*, June 1988) is this: The magazine was (as it still is) published under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee—a social-action organization, not an association tied to a particular segment of the Jewish faith. If AJC had religious leanings at all in those days, they were toward Reform Judaism, which tends to be less interested in exegeses of Scriptures than in getting out the popular vote, particularly when civil rights are at stake. While Orthodox Judaism and to an extent Conservative Judaism may root their arguments in the Bible or later commentaries and allow these arguments to bear fruit as decisions on modern questions, Reform tends to pluck the fruit, taste it, and discuss its benefits and hazards—sometimes but not always examining the trunk and the roots.

Although the American Jewish Committee, when it started *Commentary*, wanted a Jewish magazine, it did not want one which thrashed out the issues heard in seminary and temple study halls, but rather one which dealt with Jewish social and political problems such as coping with anti-Semitism or eking out existence in the far reaches of Soviet Russia. Cohen and later Podhoretz, with their stable of young political-science oriented editors, eventually convinced the Committee that the magazine should not be half Jewish, half social science, and finally this magazine published under Jewish auspices made those auspices synonymous with the best critical thought on American and world affairs. AJC then began to publish *Present Tense*, a magazine which dealt richly with Jewish affairs—probably just what was intended for *Commentary*, glossy stock, photographs, and all. But even this publication does not, to my knowledge, publish the great religious thinkers.

—Marcia Friedman
The American Council for Judaism
New York, NY

NEW!
From The Rockford Institute



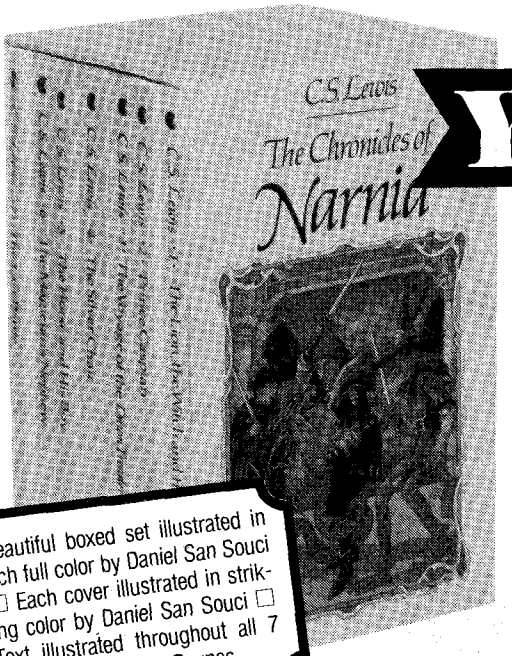
A first-of-its-kind directory of religious organizations, people, and publications engaged in public affairs. More than 160 listings with backgrounds and budgets. Formatted for quick reference for those who need the facts *fast.* **ONLY $6.95!**

To order, send name and address plus $6.95 per copy (includes postage and handling) to: The Rockford Institute, 934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103.

Payment is required before order is processed.

Z93

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Beautiful boxed set illustrated in rich full color by Daniel San Souci ☐ Each cover illustrated in striking color by Daniel San Souci ☐ Text illustrated throughout all 7 volumes by Pauline Baynes

YOURS FREE—

"The finest collection of stories for children . . . written in our times"

—CHICAGO TRIBUNE

7 uniform volumes in handsome boxed set • Publisher's price $39.95 — yours FREE

You may have started reading these stories around the age of eight. And it's safe to say you'll still be reading them at 88. Now the children you love can meet. . .

"The Christian author kids like best"
—CATHOLIC TWIN CIRCLE

"The books offer excitement and adventure enough to please restless young readers, and Christian teaching transparent enough 'to get the message across' — without seeming preachy," adds the reviewer.

It's not surprising that Christian publications of all denominations rave about C. S. Lewis. He's everyone's favorite Christian writer. But secular media are equally enthusiastic. E.g., *Parents' Choice*:

> "Rich in illusion, entertainment and philosophy . . . some of the most satisfying fantasy books ever penned . . . resolute atheists take note, NARNIA is religious fantasy . . . Aslan is God, thinly disguised. Fortunately, Lewis' rather exalted philosophical air is breezy with humor."

Every volume is a gem:

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE. How Aslan, the noble Lion, frees Narnia from the spell of the White Witch. "Fantasy in the best tradition, full of strange beasts, witches and children . . . A family book to read aloud."—*San Francisco Chronicle.* "Beautiful, frightening, wise."—*New Yorker.*

PRINCE CASPIAN. How the good Prince and his army of talking beasts conquer the Telmarines. "Good plot, convincing characters."—*Saturday Review.* "Wonderfully well written . . . style and imagination as seldom met in modern books."—*NY Herald Tribune.*

THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER. Caspian sails through magic waters to the end of the world. "Should be introduced to all imaginative children."—*Horn Book.*

THE SILVER CHAIR. How Prince Rilian escapes from the underground kingdom of the Emerald Witch. "Discriminating young fairy-tale fans . . . discover [Narnia stories] without adult help."—*NY Herald Tribune.*

THE HORSE AND HIS BOY. A talking horse and a boy prince save Narnia from invasion. "Children, surfeited on unimaginative tales of socially adjusted children learning socially useful processes, will welcome this story of kidnapped princes and knights in armor and turreted castles."—*NY Times.*

THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW. How Aslan created Narnia and gave the gift of speech to its animals. "Top-drawer Lewis for any reader from about ten up — and that definitely goes for the whole range of adult readers, too."—*Episcopal Church News.*

THE LAST BATTLE. Evil comes to Narnia, so Aslan leads his people to a new paradise. "The great themes of creation, fall, redemption and final consummation are all contained [in the seven volumes], presented so vividly that child and adult equally find themselves caught up in the spell."—*NY Times.*

Use coupon to get this classic $39.95 set FREE

How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin, which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates. Books on current issues, religion, economics, Communism, politics, children's books, etc. — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing. It will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books are offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for 4 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ Good service. No computers! ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-95% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do not count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB
15 Oakland Avenue • Harrison, N.Y. 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send me FREE the 7-volume $39.95 quality paperback set of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. I agree to buy 4 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 2 years. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon. CCUL-37

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ *State* _____ *Zip* _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED